The Romania-U.S. Partnership Deters Russian Aggression

Gabriel-Beniamin Leș, Romanian Defense Minister, shares his perspective on the importance of the Romania-U.S. partnership for enhanced security and economic growth opportunities, and urges continued momentum.

CHICAGO (PRWEB) October 08, 2019 -- The relationship between the United States and Romania has never been more important. The United States, Romania and 17 other countries recently conducted the 19th annual Sea Breeze, multinational maritime naval exercises held in Ukraine. More than 3,000 personnel, 32 warships, and 24 aircraft participated in the exercises, which were co-hosted by the U.S. and Romania. Our Sea Breeze exercises strengthen the military cooperation between Romania and the U.S. as we protect maritime security in the critical Black Sea region.

During the Sea Breeze exercise, the Russian Black Sea Fleet guided-missile destroyer Smetlivy deliberately entered a closed-off area in the Black Sea reserved for naval gunfire exercises, despite clear warnings and advance notification. The Russian ship was later interviewed by the Ukrainian frigate Hetman Sahaidachny, per international protocol, but alleged "problems with communication" as the reason for the violation.

Our strategic posture as an EU and NATO border-nation puts a burden of added risk on Romania, and our concerns about the security of the Black Sea have been clearly validated. Following the 2014 annexation of Crimea, special attention has been given to the NATO Alliance’s eastern flank as the Russian Federation regularly issues new threats and challenges.

Romania is equally concerned about hybrid threats. Information warfare and cyber-attacks are used to undermine Allied solidarity, as well as the national security of the states in the region.

To protect Europe and possible invading forces to the east, the United States is investing in Romania’s defense. Specifically, the U.S. Army committed to spending $21.6 million in 2019 to improve the Mihail Kogalniceanu base and airport, located near the Black Sea port of Constanta in Romania. The military sector of the Mihail Kogalniceanu International Airport is currently an annex of the U.S. 86th Air Base. Since 1999 it has also been used periodically by the U.S. Air Force.

The U.S. is also spending $12.9 million for anti-missile shield systems, including an installation in Deveselu in southern Romania. Deveselu will be the only anti-missile shield system currently operational in Eastern Europe. Approximately 100 soldiers from Fort Hood, Texas, deployed to Romania in April as the NATO's Aegis Ashore Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) site was improved in a long-planned upgrade.

In July, Romania made a temporary camp available to the U.S. Air Force, which began flying unmanned drones began out of the location. This move puts crucial intelligence-gathering capabilities closer to the Black Sea at a time when tensions between U.S. partners and Russia are heightened in the region.

Recently, Romania also made the central Romanian Campia Turzii Air Base—home of Romanian fighter and helicopter squadrons—available to the U.S. Air Force. The USAF relocated MQ-9 Reapers – also known as Predator B unmanned combat aerial vehicles – along with personnel and support equipment from their main operating base in northwest Poland. “This temporary relocation is conducted with the full cooperation of our NATO ally, Romania,” U.S. Air Forces in Europe said in a July 4 statement.
The Romanian Ministry of Defense continues to improve its capabilities for NATO and multinational operations and repeatedly deploys our forces and assets in support of shared national security interests. Romania has made significant contributions of troops, equipment, and other assistance in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Kosovo. Romania also hosts the NATO Multinational Division Headquarters South East, which serves as NATO’s fully operational command and control node for the region.

Romania understands that our alliance and solidarity come with responsibilities and cooperative burden-sharing. This is the third year Romania earmarked a full 2% of our GDP for defense, ensuring that the Romanian Armed Forces are strong and prepared to meet our mutual defense obligations.

The Romanian Defense Ministry would like to broaden our successful security and defense cooperation model to other sectors, with the goal of greater business and cultural ties between Romania and the United States. As part of this initiative, Romania actively welcomes U.S. companies seeking to partner with Romanian firms for mutual benefit, and to bolster both economies.

Just as the Romanian government and business community are committed to a mutually beneficial relationship with the United States, the people of Romania are equally committed. According to a 2018 European poll, a full 78% of Romanians have a favorable view of the United States.

The Romanian military, governmental, and societal commitment to our alliance with the United States should never be taken for granted. We share the same values, and we have many common interests. Let’s not lose the momentum.

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