

# Romania's International Role

An Interview with The Honorable Mircea Duşa,  
Minister of National Defense, Romania



The Hon. Mircea Duşa

**EDITORS' NOTE** Mircea Duşa graduated from the Academy of Economic Studies in Bucharest and earned his Master in the Management of European Organizations from the University "Lucian Blaga", Sibiu. From 1976 to 1986, he was the Head of Service for the Toplita Town Council and was later elected Vice President, Vice Mayor, and Mayor. Soon thereafter, he served as a deputy with the Parliament of Romania from 2004 to 2012. From May to August 2012, he was Minister for Liaison with the Parliament; from August to December 2012, he was Minister of Administration and Internal Affairs; and he was reelected deputy in December 2012 and became Minister of National Defense. From 1996 to present, he has been a member of the Social Democrat Party and President of the Harghita PSD County Organization.

**What are the strategic plans of the Romanian army and the Ministry of Defense regarding active involvement as part of the NATO mission in Afghanistan, in terms of programs providing assistance toward that country's reconstruction and development of military capabilities for the Afghan army? What is the potential timetable for the withdrawal of the Romanian military contingent in Afghanistan?**

The Romanian troops' mission in Afghanistan is a priority for Romania, during the missions that NATO has undertaken, to ensure security in the area. This year, the Ministry of Defense has decided to reduce the number of soldiers under NATO planning. The disengagement of troops will be gradual and proportional to the numbers of other countries, as NATO leadership decides.

In Afghanistan, the Romanian army is involved in many humanitarian missions, supporting the Afghan population. Romania meets its commitments under the ISAF operation in Afghanistan until they're completed and is also actively involved in the post-ISAF mission.

**What is Romania's position on potential participation in military operations conducted under the aegis of the European Union and other related activities such as Mali?**

At the request of the EU, our country participates in the mission in Mali with a team of trainers and support. Romania's participation in military operations has always been active. Missions in Iraq, Kosovo, and Afghanistan have shown that Romania has a professional army. As Defense Minister, I support the transformation of forces and capabilities at the EU level and I believe that package implementation projects launched in Chicago will eliminate deficiencies, meet new challenges, and increase efficiency for our security forces.

We pay special attention to multinational cooperation as a key factor for the development of critical capabilities. We have accumulated significant experience in multilateral cooperation, which proves to be a reliable and stable partner for the allied forces.

**The Romanian government has expressed the desire to fulfill the engagements that Romania's role in NATO have articulated, regarding air defense of NATO borders, by maintaining an air fleet performance. In this regard, the Romanian authorities have developed a strategic plan for acquisition of the multirole aircraft F16 for a new generation to replace the MiG aircraft to be withdrawn from use. What is the status of negotiations initiated by the Romanian government on the purchase of the F16 from the Portuguese authorities?**

At the last meeting of the Supreme Council of National Defense (CSAT), I was mandated to open negotiations for the purchase of these aircraft. Multirole aircraft is a national program that necessitates the collaboration of several institutions, not just the Ministry of Defense.

The concept behind the Ministry of Defense procuring the operational capabilities of multirole aircraft is that it will allow for the gradual creation of air missions to defend national airspace and fulfill the commitments to NATO.

A technical committee will travel to Lisbon in the coming weeks to begin negotiations. I will subsequently meet with the Defense Minister to complete the negotiation process. The final results will be presented at the next meeting of CSAT, after which a final decision will be made.

**Romania has proposed an allocation of 2 percent of GDP for defense, but in recent years, the budget was just over half of that target. Given these considerations, what are the main priorities of the ministry funding and which areas are disadvantaged? What are the effects on the combat capacity of the Romanian army and the fulfillment of its obligations to foreign partners?**

An annual defense budget increased by 0.03 percent would generate an endowment growth process for the Romanian army. By 2016, we expect to reach the threshold of 2 percent of GDP, according to NATO requirements. This budget increase will be reflected particularly in the modernization and equipment of the Romanian army. We need to streamline this area and bring it to a competitive level with other Member States of NATO and the EU.

Despite difficult economic and budgetary realities, there are concerns from the Romanian government to initiate and carry out the procedures required for both the endowment of multirole aircraft and all strategic procurement programs of the army, in full compliance with European legislation and national legislation.

**What are the presence of gains on the U.S. missile shield in Romania? Have real risks to the security of Romania and its citizens as a result of the decision to build the Deveselu Air Base been identified by the Ministry or the intelligence community?**

I have had numerous discussions with U.S. officials, who support us in this endeavor, ensuring that the project moves forward. Deveselu is important for Romania. The risks are much lower than the advantages of the participation of Romania in the process. We have been a NATO member for some time, we have a significant profile within the alliance, and we have installed this missile system, which is part of NATO's missile defense system.

Deveselu Base will become a NATO base and increase Romania's national security.

Following U.S. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel's announcement on modifications to U.S. missile defense plans, it is clear that the system is to be installed in Deveselu, Romania in phase 2 of the adaptive approach to missile defense in Europe (EPAA) and these plans will not be affected in any way.

We will continue to meet the schedule agreed to with the U.S., which will become operational in 2015. The missile defense project taking place in Romania will be operational, with U.S. funding being available, as announced in March by the Secretary of Defense.

**Romania has a number of obligations to NATO, some of which are difficult to implement due to budget constraints. Given the coordinated NATO needs such as deficiency in providing air transport capacity to ensure the protection of troops and lack of compelling needs of the alliance in terms of provision of multirole aircraft, have the Romanian decision-makers attempted to reconfigure these obligations so that they are consistent with Romania's budget and the needs of NATO?**

NATO's ongoing transformation will provide an effective guarantee of collective defense and maintaining the importance of the North Atlantic Alliance as a global security actor.

Romania supports the transformation of NATO in accordance with the requirements of the new Strategic Concept and the decisions Summit in Chicago. By employing Romania in 40 of the 150 projects launched under the Smart Defense initiative, I believe that developing and sharing capabilities will help to increase the effectiveness of the alliance and save significant resources.

**A topic that has not been as publicized as multirole aircraft acquisition but is as sensitive and strategically important is the naval fleet. What is the performance stage of procurement and modernization programs for this weapon and how has Russia's intention to return to a permanent fleet in the Mediterranean had an influence? How does this affect security dynamics in the region?**

Due to its geographical position, our country is a fan of "open sea" that facilitates access to other seas and especially the oceans through straits and the Danube River. With NATO and EU membership, Romania's role in the Black Sea has advanced.

As a result of increased cooperation among naval forces of the Member States, maintaining peace and stability in the region are priorities of the Romanian Navy.

The priority is to complete the frigates program by completing the last stage of modernization in two to three years – they constitute a capability significant for the Romanian Army. Successful participation in Operation Atalanta in 2012 in the Indian Ocean with such a ship gave us confidence that this should be done. This is also the basic tool with which Romania can meet obligations under Alliance Maritime.

I cannot confirm this information, but what we know is that Russia has interests in the Black Sea and the Mediterranean Sea.

**What is the current situation in which Romania participates in mixed battalions and what is the future of these forms of cooperation? Have you identified new opportunities in this area? How do you envision the future cooperation of the military in Europe?**



*Minister Mircea Duşa (second from right) meets with the former U.S. Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta at the NATO meeting of Ministers of Defense (Brussels, February 21-22, 2013)*

Since its launch, Romania has supported the concept of EUBGs, as our country is actively participating in two such configurations: one with Greece as the framework nation, along with Bulgaria, Cyprus, and Ukraine (HELBROC); the other with Italy as a nation-framework, together with Turkey (ITROT). EUBGs is an important vehicle for the transformation of the armed forces of Member States, as well as a tool to promote interoperability among them.

So far, despite the operational concept in place since 2007 – a concept that requires that two such formations of multinational EU be available every semester – EUBG was not used in a Union military operation. It is one of the reasons why the EU is conducting a process analysis for flexible use of EUBGs. This will be a topic on the agenda and will include heads of state and government at the European Council in December 2013, dedicated to European defense.

As the MND, we decided to analyze the possibility and future involvement in these formations, even on a recurring model already validated for HELBROC.

Future EUBGs will depend on the political will of the Member States relating to the effective use of multinational formations, particularly in a flexible manner.

**One of the main problems arising from participating in operations in theaters of conflict, despite some progress in recent years, is the deficiencies in ensuring the protection of the troops. How do you intend to manage this situation, taking into account a potential reduction in U.S. support due to possible budget cuts that could affect U.S. forces in coming years?**

Ensuring the protection of all U.S. allies is a priority. Romania is a staunch ally of the U.S., as Romanian ground troops are fighting alongside American troops in Zabul province in Afghanistan and elsewhere. MRAP-armored

vehicles are invaluable as Romanian soldiers patrol in their missions, protecting them from attacks by insurgents. Within the theaters of operations, there are strict rules regarding the protection of troops that are followed. In the following summits, this issue and finding a solution to improve this process will be discussed.

**Budget cuts and the change provisions relating to pensions and lack of sufficient funds for military training negatively affect the perception of the military profession. What are the Ministry's plans to counter this?**

Lately, I have seen an increasing interest from young people to become a part of the Romanian Army. A military career is not just a military education and discipline, but also good training. For that, we need well-trained young people to professionalize the army segment. Military educational institutions are prepared to develop the education process to bring it up to international standards. As Defense Minister, I will make every effort to make sure these young people have high levels of education, as the Romanian army needs to be competitive and to perform well.

**How would you characterize the Romanian-American relationship and its key drivers?**

In Iraq or Afghanistan, the Romanian-American military partnership works perfectly. Relations between the two countries are very close; we have many projects underway in the common defense segment.

Romanian Special Forces have enjoyed fantastic support from our American partners, in terms of equipment, joint training, and education.

Romania will honor their commitments by partnering with the U.S. and we will work to make sure our bilateral military relations are maintained to high standards. We must be cooperative, because we are committed to a respectful relationship. ●