



ROMANIA AND BLACK SEA SECURITY

SIEMON T. WEZEMAN AND ALEXANDRA KUIMOVA*

The security environment in the wider Black Sea region—which brings together the six littoral states (Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine) and a hinterland including the South Caucasus and Moldova—is rapidly changing. It combines protracted conflicts with a significant conventional military build-up that intensified after the events of 2014: Russia's takeover of Crimea and the start of the internationalized civil war in eastern Ukraine.¹ Transnational connections between conflicts across the region and between the Black Sea and the Middle East add further dimensions of insecurity. As a result, there is a blurring of the conditions of peace, crisis and conflict in the region. This has led to an unpredictable and potentially high-risk environment in which military forces with advanced weapons, including nuclear-capable systems, are increasingly active in close proximity to each other.

In this context, there is an urgent need to develop a clearer understanding of the security dynamics and challenges facing the wider Black Sea region, and to explore opportunities for dialogue between the key regional security actors. This background paper on Romania is part of the Black Sea Regional Security Initiative, a project launched by SIPRI in 2017 to provide independent data and analysis on security developments in the region and to promote transparency around military issues.² This paper continues by describing Romania's situation on the Black Sea (section I), it then outlines recent trends in Romania's defence policy, including an overview of Romania's national documents (section II), the structure (section III) and deployment (section IV) of its armed forces, its military spending (section V), and its arms holdings and acquisitions (section VI), with a specific focus on their relations

* The authors would like to thank the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs for providing the funding that allowed this Background Paper to be produced. They would also like to thank all those who agreed to share their expertise at the SIPRI workshop 'Shifting Black Sea Security Dynamics', 7–8 Dec. 2017.

¹ Russia gained control over Crimea in Mar. 2014 after a referendum in Crimea favoured secession from Ukraine to join Russia. Russia and a few other countries claim this to be a legal accession. However, Ukraine and most other countries call the referendum and accession to Russia an illegal annexation of Ukrainian territory. This paper uses the term 'takeover' to mark only the factual change of control of Crimea.

² As well as background papers mapping the developments in each of the 6 Black Sea littoral states, the project will publish a paper covering the various conflicts in the region: Klimenko, E., 'Protracted armed conflicts in the post-Soviet space and their impact on Black Sea security', SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security no. 2018/8, Dec. 2018, and a longer paper on the challenges in the region: Melvin, N. J., *Rebuilding Collective Security in the Black Sea Region*, SIPRI Policy Paper no. 50 (SIPRI: Stockholm, Dec. 2018). The Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs provided funding for the project.

SUMMARY

● The Black Sea region is experiencing a changing military balance. The six littoral states (Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine) intensified their efforts to build up their military potential after Russia's takeover of Crimea and the start of the internationalized civil war in eastern Ukraine in 2014.

The events of 2014 have clearly had an impact on Romania's perception of threats. Although official documents published by Romania since 2014 do not explicitly refer to Russia as a threat, they do raise concerns about security in the Black Sea region. Romania's defence policy has also prioritized the modernization of its armed forces. As a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Romania has emphasized the strategic significance of the Black Sea region in NATO discussions.



Figure 1. Map of Romania

Credit: Ahlenius, H., Nordpil, 2018.

with Black Sea security. Conclusions (section VII) summarize Romania’s position on Black Sea issues.

I. Background

During the cold war Romania was the most independent member of the Warsaw Treaty Organization (WTO), sometimes going against general WTO and Soviet policies. Since the end of the cold war its relations with its neighbours have been generally good. Romania became a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 2004 and of the European Union (EU) in 2007.

It has been an active member of NATO, supporting stronger ties between NATO and non-NATO states in the Black Sea region. It has participated in many NATO exercises and several NATO-led operations, and shares its bases



with the United States under a 2005 agreement.³ As early as 1997 Romania signed a strategic partnership with the USA and in 2009 it was praised by the USA as ‘one of the [USA’s] most trustworthy and respectable partners’.⁴ Its defence relationship with the USA has become even closer in recent years.

As a NATO member, Romania has brought the strategic significance of the Black Sea into NATO discussions. The events of 2014 and the importance of Black Sea bases for the Russian intervention in Syria have increased Romania’s concern about security in and around the Black Sea.⁵ Romania has subsequently been vocal on what it sees as Russian aggression against Ukraine and the threat that Russia poses to other European states. Romania has embraced NATO even more since 2014, participating in various joint NATO forces, increasing military spending and modernizing its armed forces.

Geographically, Romania is situated in South Eastern Europe, bordered by Ukraine and Moldova to the east, by Bulgaria to the south, by Hungary and Serbia to the west, and by another border with Ukraine to the north (see figure 1). To the east it has a coastline of 256 kilometres with the Black Sea (see table 1). It claims the standard 12-nautical mile territorial waters and 200-nautical mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ), which border on those of Bulgaria, Ukraine and, since the takeover of Crimea, Russia. The Black Sea is a major route for Romania’s trade and the EEZ is expected to contain a limited but not insignificant amount of oil and gas. Production of gas from Romania’s EEZ—the first offshore gas production in the Black Sea—is due to start in 2019.⁶

II. Defence policy

When Romania joined NATO in 2004, the organization and equipment of its armed forces were of a different standard from that of most other NATO members: they were based on an outdated system of large numbers of conscripts and reserves and used equipment dating mainly from before 1991. Since 2004 a transformation process has been under way to cut down the size of the armed forces and integrate them both operationally and technically into NATO and the EU. In 2013 the aim was to reach operational integration by 2015 and technical integration by 2025.⁷ Modernization efforts have been fast-tracked since 2014, funded by significantly increased military budgets (see section V).

In Romania’s semi-presidential system, the president has significant influence on defence policy. The president is supreme commander of the armed forces in wartime and chairs the Supreme Council of National Defence, which organizes defence and security. In June 2015 President Klaus Iohannis pre-

³ Agreement between the United States of America and Romania Regarding the Activities of United States Forces Located on the Territory of Romania, 6 Dec. 2005.

⁴ Romanian Ministry of National Defence (MND), *Romanian Defence 2013* (MND: Bucharest, 2013), p. 1; and *Bucharest Herald*, ‘Hillary Clinton: Romania, one of the most trustworthy and respectable partners of the USA’, 10 May 2009.

⁵ Leş, G.-B., ‘Romania: modernizing defense capabilities’, *Cipher Brief*, 8 Mar. 2017.

⁶ Vişan, G., *Romania’s Naval Forces at Crossroads*, Policy Paper (Romanian Energy Center: Bucharest, Mar. 2017); and Ilei, L., ‘Black Sea Oil & Gas to start offshore gas production in 2019’, *Reuters*, 24 May 2017.

⁷ Romanian Ministry of National Defence (note 4), pp. 1–2.

**Table 1.** Basic facts about Romania and the Black Sea

Area	230 000 km ²
Black Sea coastline	256 km
Waters claimed in the Black Sea	
Territorial waters	12 nautical miles (22 km)
Exclusive economic zone	200 nautical miles (370 km)
Neighbouring countries	
Land borders	Bulgaria, Hungary, Moldova, Serbia, Ukraine
Maritime borders in the Black Sea	Bulgaria, Russia (EEZ only) ^b , Ukraine
Population (2018)	19.5 million
GDP (2017)	
Total (current US\$)	\$211 billion
Per capita	\$10 757
Membership	
NATO	Member since 2004
European Union	Member since 2007
Military spending (2017)	
Total (current US\$)	\$4 004 million
As a share of GDP	2.0%

EEZ = exclusive economic zone; GDP = gross domestic product; NATO = North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

^a No final demarcation of these maritime claims has been made.

^b The border with the EEZ claimed by Russia is in waters surrounding Crimea.

Sources: International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook Database, Apr. 2018; SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, May 2018; Stanchev, H. et al., ‘Determination of the Black Sea area and coastline length using GIS methods and Landsat 7 satellite images’, *Geo-Eco-Marina*, no. 17 (2011); Oral, N., ‘Summary of EEZ zones in the Black Sea’, Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution, [n.d.]; and Vişan, G., *Romania’s Naval Forces at Crossroads*, Policy Paper (Romanian Energy Center: Bucharest, Mar. 2017).

sented a new national defence strategy for 2015–19, a 23-page document setting out a framework for defence and broader security.⁸ Its subtitle, ‘A strong Romania within Europe and the world’, indicates Romania’s aim to again be a military power of some status, as it was during the cold war. The strategy emphasizes Romania’s strategic partnership with the USA, ‘strengthening Romania’s profile within NATO and the EU’, and regional cooperation in South Eastern Europe.⁹ The document describes the deterioration of relations between NATO and Russia, active conflicts in the region and terrorism as ‘paradigm changes’ in the security environment.¹⁰ It mentions the Black Sea as a region where some of Romania’s main security interests lie, as well as where Romania has strategic and economic interests.¹¹ It takes a negative view of Russia’s actions in the Black Sea region, noting that these ‘have raised again the NATO awareness [of] fulfilling its fundamental mission that is collective defense’, but it does not go so far as to directly label Russia or Russia’s actions as a ‘threat’.¹² The main actions proposed to deal with new and increased ‘security challenges’ are (a) to increase military spending to at least 2 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2017 (from 1.4 per cent in 2016) to allow modernization of the armed forces, (b) to connect more with NATO and the USA, and (c) to develop the Romanian security industry, in

⁸ Romanian Presidential Administration, *National Defense Strategy 2015–2019: A Strong Romania within Europe and the World* (Presidential Administration: Bucharest, 2015).

⁹ Romanian Presidential Administration (note 8), pp. 9–10.

¹⁰ Romanian Presidential Administration (note 8), p. 5.

¹¹ Romanian Presidential Administration (note 8), pp. 15, 21.

¹² Romanian Presidential Administration (note 8), pp. 12–15.



cooperation with the industries in other NATO and EU members, to be able to provide the equipment needed by the armed forces.¹³ The new government that took office following the elections in December 2016 continued to follow this defence strategy.¹⁴

The national defence strategy was followed by policy documents on specific sectors of defence and security, including in 2015 a defence white paper (approved by the Romanian Parliament in April 2016), followed by a military strategy in 2016.¹⁵ In September 2017 the new government published an updated version of the 2015 white paper and approved it for the period 2015–19.¹⁶ The military strategy and the two versions of the white paper give more details on how Romania and the Romanian armed forces plan to deal with security issues in the coming years, but they do not further specify the various threat perceptions.

While the official documents are restrained in their descriptions of the threats or risks that Russia may pose, in March 2017 the Romanian defence minister, Gabriel-Beniamin Leş, was less reserved. He described the ‘increased risks and challenges fuelled by the assertive/aggressive Russia’ in the Black Sea region and ‘the militarization of the Black Sea by Russia’.¹⁷ His successor, Mihai Fifor, went further in January 2018 when he said that ‘Russia’s extremely aggressive presence in the region’ was the reason for the plans to ‘beef up [Romania’s] naval capabilities’.¹⁸

While Romania is a very active NATO member and has clearly identified serious threats to its security, interest in defence issues among Romanians is limited. In a 2015 survey of 64 countries, 38 per cent of Romanians said that they were willing to fight for their country. This ranked Romania somewhere in the middle of the European states surveyed.¹⁹ Similarly, a survey in 24 Central and East European countries in 2016 found that 50 per cent of Romanian respondents viewed NATO as protection for Romania and only 8 per cent viewed it as a threat.²⁰

III. Armed forces structure

The active and reserve strength of the Romanian armed forces has been drastically reduced since the end of the cold war (see table 2). Romania abolished conscription in 2006 and the personnel of the armed forces became fully voluntary career soldiers, following a trend in many European

¹³ The industry is also to become more competitive on the international market. Romanian Presidential Administration (note 8), pp. 18–19.

¹⁴ Leş (note 5).

¹⁵ Romanian Government, *White Paper on Defense (Ministry of National Defence: Bucharest, 2015)*; and Romanian Ministry of National Defence (MND), *The Military Strategy of Romania: Modern Armed Forces for a Powerful Romania within Europe and Around the World* (MND: Bucharest, 2016).

¹⁶ Romanian Government, ‘The defence white paper’, Press release, 9 Sep. 2017; and Romanian Ministry of National Defence (MND), *Carta albă a apărării* [Defence white paper] (MND: Bucharest, 2017).

¹⁷ Leş (note 5).

¹⁸ Gherasim, C., ‘After 22 years, Romania’s navy is aiming beneath the waves again’, Euronews, 30 Jan. 2018.

¹⁹ Gallup International Association, ‘WIN/Gallup International’s global survey shows three in five willing to fight for their country’, Press release, [Dec. 2015].

²⁰ Smith, M., ‘Most NATO members in Eastern Europe see it as protection’, Gallup, 10 Feb. 2017.



Table 2. Romanian armed forces, selected years 1987–2017

	1987	1992	2002	2007	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
<i>Personnel</i>									
Active personnel	179 500	200 000	97 200	74 267	71 400	71 400	70 500	70 500	69 300
Army	140 000	161 000	66 000	42 200	42 600	42 600	39 600	39 600	36 000
Air Force	32 000	20 000	14 000	10 500	8 400	8 400	10 300	10 300	10 300
Navy	7 500	19 000	7 200	8 067	6 900	6 900	6 600	6 600	6 500
Other MND	–	–	10 000	13 500	13 500	13 500	14 000	14 000	16 500
Reserves	794 000 ^a	593 000	104 000	42 200	45 000	45 000	50 000	50 000	50 000
Paramilitary ^b	47 000	15 000	22 900	22 900	22 900	22 900	22 900	22 900	22 900
<i>Equipment</i>									
Tanks	1 680 ^c	3 617	1 360	413	460	460	460	460	460
Other armour	3 445 ^c	3 134	2 121	1 826	1 881	1 881	1 750	1 522	1 522
Artillery over 100 mm	..	4 945	4 881	1 045	876	876	876	876	1 172
Combat aircraft	368	486	202	74	36	36	36	32	34
Helicopters	124	222	149	69	68	67	66	66	66
Major warships ^d	4	7	7	6	7	7	7	7	7
Minor warships ^d	76	50	18	3	3	3	3	3	3

.. = no data available; – = zero; MND = Ministry of National Defence.

Notes: Definitions and available information may not be consistent for all years—changes may be partly due to differences in definition or available information. Equipment in storage is included but not all equipment may be operational.

^a The figure for reserves in 1987 includes 238 000 local defence reserves but does not include the 650 000 members of the Youth Homeland Defence.

^b The figures for paramilitary forces include the Border Police, which fall under the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and in 1987 the MND security troops and full-time local defence troops.

^c These figures for tanks and other armour are probably an underestimate.

^d Major warships are combat ships of 1250 tonnes or more standard displacement; minor warships are combat ships of less than 1250 tonnes standard displacement.

Sources: International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance*, various editions; Romanian Ministry of National Defence; and media sources.

countries.²¹ This also meant that the large reserve force made up mainly of conscripts who had done their military service was heavily reduced and is likely to be further cut down. However, in May 2014, in reaction to the events in Ukraine, registration documents were prepared for the introduction of some kind of conscription in case of war.²²

The army has been most affected by the downsizing, losing more than 75 per cent of its active troops since 1992 and nearly all of its trained reserves. It also lost most of its heavy weapons, while nearly all of those remaining are from before 1990 and have undergone only limited modernization. The air force and navy have both also been substantially reduced. The air force has lost most of its aircraft and continues to fly only aircraft acquired before 1990. While the number of combat ships has fallen and the navy has lost almost all of its minor combat ships (most of which were already outdated by the early 1990s), the number of major combat ships remains the same as in 1992.

²¹ Romania Insider, ‘Romania publishes documents for mandatory enlistment in case of war’, 2 May 2014.

²² Romania Insider (note 21).



IV. Armed forces deployment

Almost all Romanian armed forces are deployed at home and organized, trained and equipped for conventional military operations in defence of national territory. However, Romanian forces have regularly been deployed abroad. Romanian land forces have been operating in Afghanistan as part of EU- and NATO-led forces since 2002, contributing over 20 000 troops in total over the period 2002–13 and smaller contributions have been made to several United Nations peace operations.²³ The navy has sent one or more ships on NATO or EU missions in the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean.²⁴

Operations and major exercises

Since joining NATO, Romania has regularly hosted or participated in exercises with NATO partners. The size and frequency of such exercises have increased in recent years.

The US-led Saber Guardian army exercise has been held since 2013 in the Black Sea region. The July 2017 exercise, which was co-hosted by Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania, was the biggest ever, with 14 000 US troops and 11 000 troops from 21 other NATO members and NATO partner countries. Saber Guardian 2017 was also the first major exercise involving the Bulgarian–Romanian brigade set up in 2016, on this occasion under Bulgarian command.²⁵ In May 2017 one of the largest recent NATO exercises, Noble Jump 2017, was conducted in Romania, Bulgaria and Greece.²⁶

The US Black Sea Rotational Force stationed in Romania also organizes various ‘security cooperation’ activities (e.g. training courses, operations and military exercises) involving US Marines and partners in the Black Sea region (including Romania), the Balkans and the Caucasus.²⁷ Romania participated in related exercises in 2016, 2017 and 2018. The August 2018 exercise, Platinum Lion 2018, was a counterinsurgency peacekeeping exercise involving 700 personnel from NATO members (Albania, Bulgaria, Montenegro, Romania and the USA) as well as members of the Partnership for Peace programme (Georgia, Moldova and Serbia).²⁸

The army has been most affected by the downsizing, losing more than 75 per cent of its active troops since 1992

²³ Romanian Ministry of National Defence (note 4); and SIPRI Multilateral Peace Operations Database, June 2018.

²⁴ Vişan (note 6).

²⁵ US Army Europe, ‘Saber Guardian 2017’, Media information kit, 10 July 2017; Novinite, ‘Novo Selo training polygon hosted the biggest multinational exercise Saber Guardian 2017’, 20 July 2017; and King, W. B., ‘Army signal soldiers support Bulgarian-led multinational brigade at Saber Guardian 17’, US Army, 12 July 2017.

²⁶ Markus, I., ‘NATO Operation Noble Jump: thousands of troops assemble in South-Eastern Europe’, *Sofia Globe*, 31 May 2017.

²⁷ Lutz, T., ‘US Marines in Bulgaria conclude exercise Platinum Lion’, US Marines, 23 Dec. 2016; and Vergun, D., ‘US soldiers in Bulgaria, Romania deter aggression, assure allies’, US Army, 26 Sep. 2017.

²⁸ US Embassy in Bulgaria, ‘Closing ceremony for Platinum Lion 2018 security exercise’, 9 Aug. 2018; and *Sofia Globe*, ‘Bulgaria hosts multinational “Platinum Lion 2018” military exercise’, 8 Aug. 2018.



Since 2016 Romania has also participated in the annual Thracian Star air exercise in Bulgaria.²⁹ The Romanian Navy, which has been highly active in exercises, has participated in several international exercises in recent years, including the annual large Briz (breeze) exercise.³⁰

Romania and NATO forces

After Russia's takeover of Crimea, Romania requested that additional NATO forces be stationed temporarily in Romania (as 'rotational forces', i.e. a permanent presence of forces made up of units on a schedule of regular rotation) and that modern 'heavy weapons' be supplied to Romania.³¹ NATO's answer to the perceived increased threat included the establishment in 2015 of a multinational division headquarters in Bucharest with 280 personnel, the Headquarters Multinational Division Southeast (HQ MND-SE). It was formed from the headquarters of Romania's First Infantry Division and is under Romanian command but includes staff from 14 other NATO states.³² The division-level HQ MND-SE does not have a fixed number of units under its control but is to coordinate and command several brigades or smaller-sized units. Most of these will be Romanian units, but units from other NATO states can also be included when needed. At the

After Russia's takeover of Crimea, Romania requested that additional NATO forces be stationed temporarily in Romania

same time, one of the six NATO Force Integration Units (NFIUs) that the 2014 NATO summit agreed should be formed on NATO's eastern flank was established in Bucharest. The NFIU in Bucharest—consisting of 40 personnel, including 20 from Romania and the rest from 11 other NATO states—aims to support collective defence planning, especially for organizing the logistics for deployment of NATO forces to Romania in times of crisis.³³ HQ MND-SE and the NFIU started functioning in 2016 by organizing several large multinational exercises, and they became fully operational in 2018.³⁴

In 2016 NATO agreed on the Forward Presence initiative to further strengthen its eastern flank by stationing multinational units in its eastern members. The initiative has two main components: the Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP), which focuses on Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, and the Tailored Forward Presence (TFP), which focuses on Bulgaria and Romania.³⁵ Romania plays a small part in the EFP and a key part in the TFP.

In the EFP, a small Romanian air defence unit of 120–150 troops is included in Battle Group Poland, which is a British–Romanian–US unit of 1100–1400 troops stationed in Poland that is subordinate to a Polish brigade.

²⁹ Radio Bulgaria, 'Thracian Star 2016 military exercise starts in Bulgarian skies', 11 July 2016; and News247WorldPress, 'Bulgaria hosts flying training for US, Romanian and Greek units', 20 July 2016.

³⁰ Novinite, 'Italian fighter aircrafts will keep our airspace safe', 14 July 2017.

³¹ Chakarova, L. and Muzyka, K., 'Naval gazing', *IHS Jane's Intelligence Review*, vol. 27, no. 11 (Nov. 2015), p. 28.

³² NATO, Headquarters Multinational Division Southeast website; and NATO, 'NATO activates new Multinational Division Southeast headquarters in Bucharest', 3 Dec. 2015.

³³ NATO Force Integration Unit Romania, 'About', [n.d.].

³⁴ NATO, Headquarters Multinational Division Southeast, 'About', [n.d.]; NATO, Headquarters Multinational Division Southeast, 'Closer to final capability achievement', 31 Jan. 2018; and Butu, A. G., 'NATO units in Bucharest, operational', *Romania Journal*, 1 July 2016.

³⁵ NATO, 'Boosting NATO's presence in the east and southeast', 1 Feb. 2018.



It became operational in 2017.³⁶ The Romanian contribution is insignificant in size but shows Romania's commitment to NATO collective defence.

The TFP, which was formed after a Romanian proposal, aims to maintain the security of Romania, Bulgaria and the Black Sea.³⁷ The TFP is a flexible and changing 'force' that does not yet have a clear structure. Its main elements are currently the Multinational Brigade Southeast (MN BDE-SE), coordination of NATO air patrols in Bulgaria and Romania, and the Combined Joint Enhanced Training Initiative (CJET).³⁸ The 5000-strong MN BDE-SE is based on a Romanian brigade and is stationed at Craiova, Romania. In its new form it still consists mainly of Romanian troops, but they are supplemented by Bulgarian and Polish troops and headquarters staff from various other NATO states.³⁹

Under a 2005 agreement the USA has access to Romanian bases

Foreign forces deployed in Romania

As noted above, under a 2005 agreement the USA has access to Romanian bases. US forces—mainly air force units with combat aircraft—have regularly deployed temporarily to Romania for exercises and operations.⁴⁰ NATO has also deployed some of its airborne early warning and control (AEW&C) aircraft to Romania, from where they can monitor the situation in a large part of Ukraine.⁴¹

Other US forces use bases and training areas in Romania for more permanent rotational deployments. In September 2017 these forces included 1300 marines acting as the Black Sea Rotational Force, 20 armed transport helicopters and several logistics support units.⁴² As part of the NATO 'assurance measures' under the Readiness Action Plan set up in 2014, other NATO countries have provided combat aircraft since May 2014 on temporary air policing deployments to bolster Romania's weak capacities for patrolling its airspace.⁴³ The latest such deployments consisted of four British combat aircraft, followed between September and December 2017 by four Canadian

³⁶ NATO, 'NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence', Fact Sheet, May 2017; and Geiger, J., 'Battle Group Poland is hailed in Orzysz, Poland', US Army, 13 Apr. 2017.

³⁷ Romania's Permanent Delegation to NATO, 'Collective defense', Apr. 2017.

³⁸ Romania's Permanent Delegation to NATO (note 37).

³⁹ NATO, 'Secretary General meets with Romanian President and Prime Minister, visits NATO troops', 9 Oct. 2017; *Nine O'clock*, 'Iohannis: hosting multinational brigade indicates Romania's preoccupation with increasing Black Sea security', 9 Oct. 2017; Romania Insider, 'The NATO multinational brigade in Romania will operate in Craiova', 28 Sep. 2016; Butu, A. G., 'President Iohannis: Poland and Bulgaria to contribute to the multinational brigade in Romania', Romania Journal, 10 July 2016; and ACTMedia, 'Romania is hosting NATO Headquarters Multinational Brigade South-East located in Craiova', 10 Oct. 2017.

⁴⁰ Chakarova and Muzyka (note 31), p. 29; and Agreement Regarding the Activities of United States Forces Located on the Territory of Romania (note 3); Marica, I., 'More than 500 troops participate in military training in Romania', Romania Insider, 19 Sep. 2016; and Romania Insider, 'US tanks, elite troops arrive in Romania in January', 15 Dec. 2016.

⁴¹ Chakarova and Muzyka (note 31), p. 29.

⁴² Vergun (note 27).

⁴³ Romanovschi, A., 'Poliția aeriană a NATO: Canada trimite peste 100 de militari și patru avioane de vânătoare CF-18 în România' [NATO air force: Canada sends over 100 soldiers and 4 CF-18 fighters to Romania], *Adevărul*, 17 Aug. 2017; and NATO, Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE), 'NATO assurance measures', [n.d.].

Table 3. Romanian military expenditure, 2007–17

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
In national currency (current lei m.)	6 358	7 558	6 785	6 630	7 255	7 293	8 162	9 014	10 337	10 738	16 322
Annual change (%)	0.5	18.9	-10.2	-2.3	9.4	0.5	11.9	10.4	14.7	3.9	52.0
In US dollars (constant 2016 US\$ m.)	2 127	2 344	1 993	1 836	1 899	1 847	1 988	2 173	2 506	2 644	3 975
Annual real-terms change (%)	-4.1	10.2	-15.0	-7.9	3.4	-2.7	7.6	9.3	15.4	5.5	50.3
As a share of GDP (%)	1.5	1.4	1.3	1.2	1.3	1.2	1.3	1.3	1.5	1.4	2.0
Per capita (current US\$)	124	144	108	102	117	104	122	135	130	124	204
As a share of total government spending (%)	4.3	4.0	3.5	3.3	3.5	3.5	3.8	4.0	4.2	4.5	6.2

GDP = gross domestic product.

^a Data for 2017 is for budgeted spending—actual spending has been estimated to have been somewhat lower; for all other years data is actual spending.

Source: SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, May 2018.

aircraft, joined in September and October by four Portuguese aircraft. From early 2018 Portuguese aircraft took over from the Canadians.⁴⁴

In 2010 Romania agreed to host part of a NATO–US missile defence system.⁴⁵ The system became operational in 2016, with 24 SM-3 missiles based at Deveselu Airbase in southern Romania.⁴⁶ It is expected that additional NATO forces will be based in Romania to protect the system.⁴⁷ The stationing of the system in Romania (and Poland) has drawn strong criticism from Russia: while NATO claims that the system is to intercept missiles fired by rogue states (such as Iran), Russia sees the system as a threat to its nuclear deterrence and has warned of consequences. Romanian–Russian relations have suffered as a result.⁴⁸

While basing of foreign air and land forces is technically without limitations, non-Black Sea countries cannot base ships in Romanian ports and even temporary deployments for exercises are limited. The 1936 Montreux Convention prohibits naval ships from countries outside the Black Sea from staying longer than 21 days in the Black Sea and puts limits on the type and maximum tonnage of any naval ships temporarily deployed.⁴⁹

V. Military spending

Between 2007 and 2017 Romanian military expenditure increased by 87 per cent in real terms (see table 3). However, the change in spending was not even across those years. The financial crisis of 2008 had a heavy impact on military spending: between 2008 and 2012 it dropped by 21 per cent. It

⁴⁴ Romanovschi (note 43); Vergun (note 27); and NATO, ‘“Falcon Defence 2017” brings Portuguese F-16s to Romania’, 6 Oct. 2017.

⁴⁵ NATO, ‘NATO ballistic missile defence’, Fact Sheet, July 2016.

⁴⁶ NATO (note 45); and LaGrone, S., ‘Aegis Ashore site in Romania declared operational’, USNI News, 12 May 2016.

⁴⁷ Chakarova and Muzyka (note 31), p. 29.

⁴⁸ Emmott, R., ‘US activates Romanian missile defense site, angering Russia’, Reuters, 12 May 2016.

⁴⁹ Convention Regarding the Régime of the Straits, signed at Montreux 20 July 1936, entered into force 9 Nov. 1936, *League of Nations Treaty Series*, vol. 173, nos 4001–32 (1936–37), Article 18(2).



also fell as a share of both GDP and total government spending, indicating that it had a lower priority than other spending. Growth started again slowly in 2013 and then increased significantly in 2014 and 2015, followed by a smaller increase in 2016. In 2017 military spending increased by a substantial 50 per cent over 2016; military spending in 2017 was budgeted to be 83 per cent higher than in 2014.

Like other NATO members, Romania has agreed to spend at least 2 per cent of its GDP on defence. All Romanian political parties have agreed on this, and the 2015 national defence strategy set 2017 as the target date to reach the 2 per cent threshold, with the aim of staying at that level for at least 10 years.⁵⁰ The 2015 defence white paper, basing itself on a national political agreement on defence spending, estimated that military spending would already be 12.7 billion lei or 1.7 per cent of GDP in 2016, 15.8 billion lei or 2 per cent of GDP by 2017 and 24.7 billion lei by 2026, with GDP growing by 65 per cent between 2015 and 2026.⁵¹ The 2017 defence white paper kept the 2 per cent of GDP plan for 2017–26 but, as GDP was projected to grow faster, increased the spending values to 16.3 billion lei for 2017 and 25.9 billion lei for 2026.⁵² The Social Democrat-led government that has been in office since 2016 supports spending a minimum of 2 per cent of GDP.⁵³ However, there is some opposition to it within the Social Democratic party.⁵⁴

In reality, the plans were not met in 2016, when actual spending was 10.7 billion lei (\$2.6 billion), 16 per cent lower than the planned budget. This was equivalent to 1.4 per cent of GDP, or 18 per cent lower than the 1.7 per cent planned in the white paper (see table 3). The large military budget increase in 2017 brought planned spending in absolute terms above the white paper's target of 15.8 billion lei and to the target of 2 per cent of GDP. However, in January 2018 the defence minister, Fifer, revealed that not all the planned spending in 2017 had been realized due to delays in acquisitions and that actual spending had reached only 1.8 per cent of GDP.⁵⁵

Between 2007 and 2017 Romanian military expenditure increased by 87 per cent in real terms

VI. Arms holdings and acquisitions

The Romanian armed forces still operate equipment largely acquired before the end of the cold war. Over the past 25 years many plans have been announced for new equipment and major modernization of existing equipment. However, these have often been cancelled, reduced in scope or delayed, mainly due to lack of funding.

The 2015 national defence strategy, subsequent documents and recent statements from policymakers have emphasized that acquisition of new

⁵⁰ Romanian Presidential Administration (note 8), p. 18; Agerpress, 'President Iohannis unveils Romanian National Defence Strategy to parliament', 22 June 2015; and Romanian Government (note 15), p. 59.

⁵¹ Romanian Government (note 15), p. 59.

⁵² Romanian Ministry of National Defence (note 16), p. 48.

⁵³ Romanian Government, 'The 2017 Defence White Paper, adopted by the Government', Press release, 30 June 2017; Lazar, V., 'Defence minister Fifer on US visit, states Romania will allot 2pc of GDP for defence in next 10 years', Romania Journal, 20 Sep. 2017; and Romanian Ministry of National Defence (note 16), p. 48.

⁵⁴ Vişan (note 6), p. 12.

⁵⁵ Romania Insider, 'Defense minister wants first submarine made in Romania', 30 Jan. 2018.



equipment and modernization of the armed forces' infrastructure are a priority.⁵⁶ A substantial part of the planned increases in military spending is for capital investment—the acquisition of equipment. Capital spending is set to be 50–150 per cent higher annually in 2017–26 than it was in 2015.⁵⁷

Army

After the end of the cold war, the Romanian Army largely depended on equipment acquired before 1991. Much of this was of Soviet or Romanian design and the Romanian arms industry to some extent was able to maintain or improve this equipment.⁵⁸ However, by the mid-2000s much of it had become outdated and new equipment was sought. Acquisitions by 2017 remained limited due to budget constraints.

Since 2006 only a small number of armoured personnel carriers (APCs) have been acquired—some as aid from the USA—mainly to support Romanian operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.⁵⁹ Plans for larger numbers of APCs and infantry fighting vehicles, up to 600, have been formulated for several years and by late 2017 Romania had selected the Swiss-designed Piranha-5 after the earlier expected selection of the German Boxer fell through.⁶⁰ An order for 227 Piranha-5 APCs, which will cost around €895 million (\$1.1 billion), was signed in January 2018, with the first 36 to be delivered in 2018 from the Swiss production line, followed by 179 produced in Romania.⁶¹ Additional similar armoured vehicles may be sourced from Romania based on a local design that is still being developed.⁶²

Romania also plans to acquire other new weapons, including up to 54 HIMARS multiple rocket launchers, possibly with long-range (300 km) ground-to-ground missiles.⁶³ In January 2018 Fifor, the defence minister, announced that more armoured vehicles and HIMARS launchers are to be ordered in 2018.⁶⁴

Air defence missile systems have been a priority for Romania since the late 1990s when its air defence was still based on outdated Soviet-era S-75 and 2K12 systems—unlike other WTO states, Romania did not receive the more advanced Soviet systems. Thus, in 2004 Romania ordered eight surplus I-HAWK surface-to-air missile (SAM) systems from the Netherlands while planning an order for more advanced systems.⁶⁵ After abandoning a plan to

⁵⁶ See e.g. Romanian Presidential Administration (note 8).

⁵⁷ Increases are in current prices; actual increases will be smaller in real terms due to inflation, predicted by various sources to be c. 2–3% per year. Leş (note 5); and Romanian Government (note 15), p. 59.

⁵⁸ On the Romanian arms industry see e.g. Kiss, Y., SIPRI, *Arms Industry Transformation and Integration: The Choices of East Central Europe* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2014), chapter 9.

⁵⁹ SIPRI Arms Transfers Database, Mar. 2018.

⁶⁰ Atik, U., 'Germany and Romania agree on manufacturing armoured personnel carriers', *European Security Journal*, 13 Mar. 2017.

⁶¹ Butu, A. G., 'Contract signed for the purchase of Piranha V armoured wheeled vehicles: how many will be delivered this year?', *Romania Journal*, 19 Jan. 2018.

⁶² Bingham, J., 'Romania orders Piranha 5s from GDELS', *IHS Jane's Defence Weekly*, 15 Jan. 2018.

⁶³ US Defense Security Cooperation Agency, 'Romania: High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS) and related support and equipment', News Release no. 17-36, 18 Aug. 2017.

⁶⁴ *Romania Insider* (note 55).

⁶⁵ Tudor, R., 'Romania to get Dutch HAWK missiles', *IHS Jane's Defence Weekly*, 9 Mar. 2005.

Air defence missile systems have been a priority for Romania since the late 1990s



acquire SAM systems from France in 2009, Romania selected the US Patriot system in a programme worth up to \$4.6 billion. In early 2018 Romania had ordered the first Patriot systems—the most advanced version, the Configuration 3+ system—costing around \$910 million, and it plans to order up to six more systems.⁶⁶ The Patriot system uses anti-aircraft missiles with a range of 160 km and short-range anti-missile missiles.

Air Force

The Romanian Air Force operates 36–38 combat aircraft: 24–26 LanceR aircraft and 12 F-16C aircraft. The LanceRs are all that remain of 110 Soviet MiG-21 combat aircraft supplied by the Soviet Union that were modernized with Israeli electronics 15–20 years ago. They are nearing the end of their useful lives.⁶⁷ The F-16s were bought second-hand from Portugal at a relatively low price of €181 million (\$203 million) and delivered in 2016–17 after a major overhaul.⁶⁸ Romania announced plans in early 2017 to acquire another 20 used F-16s from the USA to replace the LanceRs.⁶⁹ By early 2018 the planned acquisition had increased to 40.⁷⁰

Coastal defence has become a higher priority after the events of 2014

Apart from the F-16s, acquisitions in the past 10 years have consisted of only a handful of medium-sized transport aircraft. Romania plans to place an order soon for 15–16 H215M medium-sized transport helicopters, to be produced under licence in Romania.⁷¹ Requirements and long-term plans exist for more combat aircraft, 24 combat helicopters and various types of non-combat aircraft. All of these plans are in their early stages.⁷²

Navy

The Romanian Navy consists of three large frigates and four light frigates/corvettes, three smaller combat ships and a host of support and other non-combat ships. The combat ships and most of the other ships are not very modern or very capable and they are not fit for modern warfare.⁷³

Two of the three large frigates were acquired second-hand from the United Kingdom in 2003, and the third large frigate was locally produced and dates from 1985. The two former British ships were delivered without their anti-aircraft and anti-ship missile systems, leaving them with only limited anti-

⁶⁶ Army Recognition, 'Raytheon to deliver Patriot Configuration 3+ air defense systems to Romania', 17 May 2018; US Defense Security Cooperation Agency, 'Romania: Patriot air defense system and related support and equipment', News Release no. 17-35, 11 July 2017; Tudor, R., 'Romania to pay USD700 million for first patriot missile system', *IHS Jane's Defence Weekly*, 24 Oct. 2017; and Romania Insider (note 55).

⁶⁷ Van Noye, A., 'Viitruul din Forțele Aeriene Române' [The future of the Romanian Air Force], *Runway28*, 17 Sep. 2015.

⁶⁸ *Scramble*, 'Military news & updates', no. 464 (Jan. 2018), p. 76; and Tudor, R., 'Romania looks to buy 20 more F-16s', *IHS Jane's Defence Weekly*, 14 Mar. 2017.

⁶⁹ Tudor (note 68).

⁷⁰ Tudor (note 68); and Romania Insider, 'Romania wants 40 more F-16 fighters', 21 Feb. 2018.

⁷¹ Adamowski, J., 'Romania to buy H215 helos from Airbus-IAR consortium', *Defense News*, 3 Nov. 2017.

⁷² Adamowski, J., 'Eastern European allies eye fighter jet, helo procurements', *Defense News*, 28 Aug. 2017; and Adamowski (note 71).

⁷³ Vișan (note 6).



submarine warfare (ASW) and basic patrol capabilities. They each carry a helicopter with limited ASW sensors but no ASW weapons. Modernization, including installation of new anti-aircraft, anti-ship and ASW systems, has been planned since the ships were acquired but has been delayed due to a lack of funds.⁷⁴ In 2016 an 839 million lei (\$208 million) contract was reported to be ‘close’, but the modernization was still in the planning stage by early 2018, and it is highly questionable if the amount set aside in 2016 is enough for the full planned modernization.⁷⁵ The third large frigate is of an outdated design and has had only limited upgrades since 1985. It is likely to be decommissioned soon.⁷⁶

The four light frigates/corvettes are 20–34 years old, have had no major upgrade since being commissioned and have limited combat capabilities. A plan to replace them with slightly larger and much more capable ships was announced more than 10 years ago, but this was delayed due to a lack of funds.⁷⁷ In late 2016 the Romanian Ministry of National Defence announced that a €1.6 billion (\$1.7 billion) contract was to be signed for four light frigates of Dutch design to be produced in Romania. However, the agreement for the ships and their armament was cancelled early in 2017 due to mistakes in the procurement process.⁷⁸ In August 2017 Romania launched a new tender, but this time for only two frigates.⁷⁹ However, the plan to acquire a total of four remained in place and in early 2018 the Romanian Parliament approved four ships, which will probably be of the previously selected Dutch design.⁸⁰

While Russia is not named as a ‘threat’ in official documents, it is clear that Romania views Russia as a major threat to the security of the Black Sea

Romania acquired a single submarine in the 1980s from the Soviet Union and it is still officially in service, although it has been inactive since 1995 due to a need for major overhaul. Since then modernization plans have been mentioned, most recently in 2007, but these have always been delayed or cancelled, and the boat is now considered to be past recovery.⁸¹ The first plans for new submarines were announced in January 2018, when Fifor, the defence minister, unveiled a plan for possibly as many as three submarines, including production in Romania.⁸²

Coastal defence, for which Romania uses three Tarantul-class fast attack craft and land-based anti-ship missiles and guns, has become a higher priority after the events of 2014.⁸³ However, the three Tarantul ships are

⁷⁴ Tudor, R., ‘Romania’s Type 22 frigates set for upgrade’, *IHS Jane’s Defence Weekly*, 23 Mar. 2016; Saunders, S. (ed.), *IHS Jane’s Fighting Ships 2016–2017* (IHS: Coulsdon, 2016), p. 669; and Vişan (note 6).

⁷⁵ Romania Insider (note 55); Pape, A., ‘Romania outlines fleet modernisation plans’, *IHS Jane’s Defence Industry*, 28 Jan. 2016; Tudor (note 74), p. 12; Vişan (note 6); and Adamowski, J., ‘Romania launches corvette procurement, eyes offset to modernize frigates’, *Defense News*, 5 Mar. 2018.

⁷⁶ Vişan (note 6).

⁷⁷ Saunders, ed. (note 74), pp. 671–72.

⁷⁸ Tudor (note 68).

⁷⁹ Groizeleau, V., ‘La Bulgarie et la Roumanie lancent des appels d’offres pour des corvettes’ [Bulgaria and Romania launch requests for proposals for corvettes], *Mer et Marine*, 28 Aug. 2017.

⁸⁰ Romanian Ministry of National Defence (MND), *Romanian Defence 2017* (MND: Bucharest, 2017), p. 16; Adamowski, J., ‘Romania to buy 3 sub, 4 ships to bolster Black Sea ops’, *Defense News*, 9 Feb. 2018; and Adamowski (note 75).

⁸¹ Lordache, D., ‘“Delfinul”: cu submarinul la reparat’ [*Delfinul*: with the submarine repaired], *Jurnalul Național*, 8 Oct. 2007.

⁸² Romania Insider (note 55); and Gherasim (note 18); and Adamowski (note 80).

⁸³ Vişan (note 6).



also from the cold war period and are old, outdated and use key equipment of Soviet origin that has been difficult to maintain as relations with Russia have changed. The modernization was planned to start in 2017 and go on until 2026, but no progress had been made at the time of writing, and the usefulness of spending money on 30-year-old ships has been questioned. The land-based anti-ship missile systems are also outdated but in 2017 an intention was announced to replace them with new systems, with missiles with a range of 150–200 km.⁸⁴

VII. Conclusions

Romania recognizes many potential threats to its security, both direct and indirect, which it also sees as growing in recent years. The events of 2014 have clearly had an impact on Romania's thinking about security threats and risks. While Russia is not named as a 'threat' in official documents, it is clear that most Romanian political leaders view Russia as a major threat to the security of the Black Sea and Romania. Romania is committed to dealing with such threats as a member of NATO and the EU, and supports NATO's aim to increase military spending and military cooperation, coordination and interoperability.

Romania's own armed forces are largely still using outdated equipment, most of it from the cold war period. Modernization of the armed forces has been delayed mainly because of a lack of funds. Plans for improvements have existed for decades and have become more urgent and prioritized since 2014. Significant increases in funding have been agreed and, particularly in 2017, important steps have been taken to increase the military budget and decide on orders for new equipment. However, there are still doubts about whether all the plans will come to fruition and it will take time to convert the Romanian armed forces into a more modern and effective military force.

⁸⁴ Vişan (note 6); and Romanian Ministry of National Defence (note 80).

SIPRI is an independent international institute dedicated to research into conflict, armaments, arms control and disarmament. Established in 1966, SIPRI provides data, analysis and recommendations, based on open sources, to policymakers, researchers, media and the interested public.

GOVERNING BOARD

Ambassador Jan Eliasson,
Chair (Sweden)
Dr Dewi Fortuna Anwar
(Indonesia)
Dr Vladimir Baranovsky
(Russia)
Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi
(Algeria)
Espen Barth Eide (Norway)
Jean-Marie Guéhenno (France)
Dr Radha Kumar (India)
Dr Patricia Lewis (Ireland/
United Kingdom)
Dr Jessica Tuchman Mathews
(United States)

DIRECTOR

Dan Smith (United Kingdom)



STOCKHOLM INTERNATIONAL PEACE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Signalistgatan 9
SE-169 72 Solna, Sweden
Telephone: +46 8 655 97 00
Email: sipri@sipri.org
Internet: www.sipri.org

SIPRI BACKGROUND PAPER

ROMANIA AND BLACK SEA SECURITY

SIEMON T. WEZEMAN AND ALEXANDRA KUIIMOVA

CONTENTS

I. Background	2
II. Defence policy	3
III. Armed forces structure	5
IV. Armed forces deployment	7
Operations and major exercises	7
Romania and NATO forces	8
Foreign forces deployed in Romania	9
V. Military spending	10
VI. Arms holdings and acquisitions	11
Army	12
Air Force	13
Navy	13
VII. Conclusions	15
Figure 1. Map of Romania	2
Table 1. Basic facts about Romania and the Black Sea	4
Table 2. Romanian armed forces, selected years 1987–2017	6
Table 3. Romanian military expenditure, 2007–17	10

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Siemon T. Wezeman (Netherlands) is a Senior Researcher with the SIPRI Arms Transfers and Military Expenditure Programme. His areas of research include the monitoring of arms transfers, with particular focus on the Asia–Pacific region and former Soviet Union, and the use of weapons in conflicts.

Alexandra Kuimova (Russia) is a Research Assistant with the SIPRI Arms Transfers and Military Expenditure Programme. Working with the SIPRI Military Expenditure, Arms Industry and Arms Transfers databases, she focuses on developments in the Middle East and North Africa region, and post-Soviet states.