
ROMANIA GROUNDS FIGHTER JETS AFTER FATAL CRASH

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The Romanian Defence, Mihai Fifor, said on Friday that all the country's old Soviet MiG-21 Lancer fighter jets will be grounded until the end of an investigation, after a MiG-21 Lancer crashed last Sunday at an air rally near Constanta on the Black Sea coast.

"After last week's tragedy at the aviation rally, according to the procedures during the investigation, the MiG fighter jets will remain grounded," he said.

Fifor noted that the Romanian airspace will be guarded and air police missions carried out by four British Eurofighter Typhoons.

Romanian officials stress that Russian fighter jets violate frequently Romanian and NATO airspace. There were several reports of such violations recently.

Air police patrols follow standard procedures and intercept them immediately from Kogalniceanu military base near Constanta.

The Romanian military has kept the number of its old MiG-21 fighters a secret. However, media have reported that about 30 aircraft remain functional out of 111 jets modernized by the Israeli company Elbit to NATO standards in the 1990s.

Romania has bought 12 F-16 second-hand fighter jets from Portugal, but they are not operational yet due to the ongoing training of the pilots.

The Romanian Air Force plan to buy another 36 multi-role combat aircraft by 2022, after Romania raised defence spending to 2 per cent of national GDP, so complying with NATO and US demands.

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