
US PLANS TO UPGRADE MILITARY BASES IN ROMANIA, BULGARIA

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The United States Army is set to invest almost \$27 million in Romania and Bulgaria in 2019, according to the record \$717 million defence budget signed on Tuesday by President Donald Trump.

The budget envisages that US troops continue rotational deployments to Romania and Bulgaria while taking full advantage of the training opportunities available at military locations such as Camp Mihail Kogalniceanu in Romania and Novo Selo Training Area in Bulgaria.

It pledges more support and security cooperation with the two countries, as well as with Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia.

In Bulgaria, the US Army is scheduled to invest \$5.2 million in modernisation and construction at the Novo Selo Training Range, 70 kilometres from the Black Sea resort of Burgas.

The Novo Selo Training Area is among the joint US-Bulgarian military bases established according to the 2006 Defence Cooperation Agreement between the two countries.

The US Army started in 2008 with a \$61.15 million investment programme meant to develop new housing and other infrastructure for the American troops training at Novo Selo.

For improving Romanias Mihail Kogalniceanu base and airport, located in the vicinity of Black Sea port of Constanta, the US Army intends to spend \$21.6 million in 2019.

However, for the fiscal year 2019 the Pentagon also received \$6.5 billion for its European Deterrence Initiative (EDI), a programme that began in 2016 and is intended to reassure Eastern European allies and deter Russia from further incursion into Europe following its annexation of Crimea.

In June 2017, the US Army announced that it would spend up to \$60 million through the EDI in upgrading the military base and airport in Mihail Kogalniceanu in Romania by the end of the year.

The new US defence budget also provides \$12.9 million for the anti-missile shield systems, including the one in Deveselu in southern Romania, the only one which is currently operational in Eastern Europe. The document published on the US Senate website does not refer directly to Deveselu, but insists on the development of the missile shield system in Alaska.

However on May 8, Inside Defense reported that the Missile Defence Agency has plans to give the land-based Aegis Ballistic Missile Defence system the means to intercept cruise missiles and

aircraft, which would mean new investments in Romania.

The Aegis Ashore Missile Defence System would be equipped with Searams, a missile system designed to defend ships against cruise missiles, as well as unmanned aircraft and helicopters, so that it could simultaneously combat incoming ballistic missiles and lower-flying air threats.

US Missile Defence Agency Director Lieutenant General Sam Greaves told a congressional hearing in April that two tests had already taken place in Deveselu and that the agency was waiting for funding for a new demonstration. But this programme would cost some \$94.7 million, he said.

The Pentagon's first Aegis Ashore system in Romanias Deveselu, which cost some \$800 million, was optimised to intercept long-range ballistic missiles and has been operational since 2016.

On August 3, when the US Congress approved the defence budget, Romanias president saluted the decision.

President Klaus Iohannis reiterates Romanias resolve to continue meeting its commitments at bilateral and allied level, as regards to the defence budget and the national contribution to NATO missions and operations, in line with the decisions taken at the [Western military alliances] Wales Summit, the Warsaw Summit and the most recent one, in Brussels, said a statement from Iohanniss office.

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