
NATO MEMBER ROMANIA WARNS OF INCREASED RUSSIAN ACTIVITY IN BLACK SEA

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NATO member Romania voiced concern on Wednesday over increased Russian military activity in the Black Sea which it borders and said strengthening European defence would be a major theme when it assumes the rotating European Union presidency in January.

"The Russian Federation is using the Black Sea to project force in the eastern Mediterranean," Defence Minister Mihai Fifor told an international conference hosted by the Aspen Institute think tank.

"The situation has changed dramatically in the last year," he said.

Romania is one of the European NATO states along with Poland that has ramped up defence spending, as the alliance seeks to deter Russia and undergo modernisation.

Foreign Minister Teodor Melescanu told the conference that strengthening cybersecurity and addressing hybrid warfare threats from Russia would also be an additional focal point during Romania's presidency of the EU.

Speaking to Reuters later, Fifor said the Bucharest government planned to unveil two more major military procurement programmes before year's end, augmenting already announced plans to buy new fighter jets and other equipment.

He said Romania had met the NATO defence spending target of 2 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) for the past two years, and would continue spending at that level for a decade.

"We plan to add two more major programmes after we present them to the Supreme Defence Council," Fifor said.

He gave no details on what type of acquisitions would be involved in the two procurement programmes.

Earlier this year, Romania signed up to buy Patriot missile defence systems as part of an integrated air defence system. It also hosts a U.S. ballistic missile defence station and has contributed troops to U.S.-led and NATO campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan.

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/world/nato-member-romania-warns-of-increased-russian-activity-in-black-sea-10812316>

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