
ROMANIA, BULGARIA BOOST DEFENSE BUYS AMID WORRIES ABOUT RUSSIA

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As Russia becomes increasingly determined to project its military power over the Black Sea, Romania and Bulgaria are accelerating programs to modernize their armed forces and replace Soviet-designed gear with Western-made weapons and equipment, writes Defense News.

With the largest defense contracts in both countries history underway, Bucharest and Sofia face the challenge to boost military expenditure after years of underinvestment.

The year 2014 was a turning point for the security of the Black Sea region," George Scutaru, a member of Parliament for Romanias National Liberal Party and the director for development at the Bucharest-based New Strategy Center think tank, told Defense News.

"Russias annexation of the Crimea, the war in eastern Ukraine, the rapid increase of Russias A2/AD capabilities in the region, prompted Romania to take concrete measures to increase its deterrence and defense capabilities, he added. Increasing naval capabilities is another major objective for Romania.

The acronym A2/A2 is short for anti-access, aerial denial. It describes defensive military measures aimed at keeping enemy forces as far away as possible from locations so tactically important that their occupation could decide the outcome of a battle.

As part of its efforts to counter such moves by would-be adversary Russia, the Romanian government in July announced it will purchase four new Gowind corvettes from a consortium of Frances Naval Group and its Romanian partner, local shipbuilder Santierul Naval Constanta.

Under the [] billion (U.S. \$1.3 billion) deal, the companies will also upgrade the Romanian Navys two Type 22 frigates [] the F-221 Regina Maria and the F-222 Regele Ferdinand [] as well as build a maintenance facility and a training center.

Romania also wants to buy anti-ship missile launchers," Scutaru said. Another objective of Romania will be to strengthen the [intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance] capabilities in the Black Sea. In this way, Romania wants to show determination in the process of increasing its own defense capabilities, thus contributing to NATOs effort to discourage Russian actions in the Black Sea region.

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