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Clear military manoeuvres from Moldova

Between the 29th of January and the 2nd of February, a group of experts from NATO visited Moldova to assist and offer expertise in developing and implementing the national military strategy, as well as drafting, coordinating and implementing of the defence planning documents concerning the building and development of the Armed Forces in compliance with the provisions of the National Defense Strategy and Military Strategy.

This visit was part of NATO's Defense Capacity Building Initiative for the Republic of Moldova (DCBI), launched in 2015 and with the hope that it will start its second phase (training for the various branches of the Armed Forces)[*Implementation of the Defense Capacity Building Initiative for the Republic of Moldova Discussed at Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Defense of Republic of Moldova, 29/01/2018*].

Furthermore on the 16th of February the Minister of Defence Eugen Sturza met the Ambassador of Georgia in the Republic of Moldova, Merab Antadze. The talks were about the regional situation, military bilateral cooperation and the opportunities for strengthening the Moldovan-Georgian partnership. Eugen Sturza informed the Ambassador of Georgia about the defence institutions' priorities including the objective of increasing the participation in peacekeeping operations, the National Army reform in the context of implementing the DCBI [*Republic of Moldova and Georgia to Strengthen Defense Cooperation, Ministry of Defense of Republic of Moldova, 16/02/2018*]. Georgia is one of the most pro-Western states in Eastern Europe and the Moldovan moves are towards a rapprochement with the Eastern European block that is opposed to Putin's Russia.

Moreover, the announcement on the 9th of February that Moldova will join the Platinum Eagle exercises on February 12-16 in Romania's Babadag military range, suggests the path that Moldavia is undertaking. In 2017, the Defence Ministry announced plans to participate to this exercise after pro-Russian President Igor Dodon refused to sign a decree allowing the deployment. Dodon said that the participation to the manoeuvres was "inappropriate", claiming he wanted to keep Moldovan forces neutral in global affairs. Dubbed "Platinum Eagle", the four-day exercise is designed to help coordinate

the command-and-control capabilities of the participating nations (United States, Georgia, Bulgaria, Ukraine and Romania), as well as their ability to work together in complex battlefield manoeuvres. The move is likely to spark the ire of Moldova's staunchly pro-Russian President Igor Dodon [*Moldova Says Troops To Join Military Manoeuvres In Romania*, Radio Free Europe – Radio Liberty, 10/02/2018].

This initiative signals clearly a rapprochement towards Western circles and will spark some hard talk between pro-Russian and pro-Western factions. Unfortunately Moldova has already an open issue with the secession of Transnistria, where still Russian forces are deployed, and this means that caution is indispensable if national unity has to be achieved.

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