

THE ADAPTATION OF THE AIR FORCE DOCTRINE TO THE ROMANIA NATIONAL DEFENSE STRATEGY

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Abstract: *From military theorists` perspective, the airspace is an area from which objectives of strategic importance to the enemy can be effectively engaged and neutralized, in order to disorganize the command and control system at strategic level, as well as to diminish the enemy`s operational potential to develop and the tactical effort in the area / areas where military actions are carried out.*

From this point of view, maintaining control of the airspace is a necessary condition for providing national security, and this can be achieved by constantly updating the doctrine of the air force, the one that manages the use of airborne vectors (aviation, missiles, artillery, drones, etc.) and supports the development of specific infrastructures, research and production elements, as well as modern structures for the educational and training needs of the Air Force.

The airspace and going beyond that, the circumterrestrial space are areas where there are no physical limitations or obstacles, geographical or relief conditions as found in districts where land forces operate or in the areas of military operations carried out by naval forces. Given the lack of these restrictions, the branch that uses the airspace has a unique feature, namely ubiquity, a characteristic that outlines the special importance of air force and air doctrine in meeting the objectives of military strategy and national security.

Keywords: *Strategy, geopolitics, air power, strategic importance, air space*

1. INTRODUCTION

Romania, as state and nation, has preferred throughout history to approach a national defensive strategy as compared to the geopolitical scene actors and especially to the ambitions expressed by the great powers in order to gain economic, territorial and military hegemony, at least for two reasons. Firstly, it is due to the geographical positioning of our country, at the meeting point of states` economic and territorial interests with local leadership status, Romania being forced to adopt a cautious and diplomatic position towards the challenges to which the regional security environment has been and it is subjected to. Secondly, the size and the military potential represent a concern that is in direct connection with the political power and especially with the economic force. This is extremely important for the viability of the military and it supposes that the political decision is always in consensus and supported from an economic point of view to allow the immediate reaction of the armed forces and their decisive intervention, as a form of response to dangers and /or threats to the national security environment.

Nowadays, Romania has a different approach to the national strategy, even if it maintains the defensive tendency, it is more active and strongly anchored in the realities of the regional and global security environment, namely, a modern strategy, with clear objectives of ensuring national security, of defending national values and interests and last but not least, for the defense of the national territory and of all the citizens of the country. To achieve these objectives, Romania has joined the strongest political and military alliance, strategic partnerships have been signed and important funds have been allocated to the defense budget, with which programs and projects have been launched to equip the military with modern and high-tech modern capabilities that are able to cope with the threats of the modern battlefield.

The complexity of the current security environment is determined by the presence of unique threats, extremely dangerous, which overlap with the area of responsibility of the national security system and create pressure on society, and the uncertainty, the lack of predictability and vision, the indecision among political class, are felt in all areas and sectors and determine the population, the “voice in the street”, to react to the perception of these threats and vulnerabilities.

There is more and more talk about increasing the level of resilience, about returning to normality, but the COVID-19 pandemic imposes extreme measures and the application of restrictions. Thus, exits and entrances to and from the country are conditioned, as well as the access to public and cultural institutions, the courses attendance is online, and movement in cities is no longer so free. The structures within the national defense system, public order and national security are being put to the test, and the Ministry of National Defense has an important mission and a defining role in combating the COVID-19 pandemic and especially in adapting the defense and national security systems to combat conditions, specific to the contaminated environment.

The response of the Ministry of National Defense to the current threats is firm and concretized in the adopted strategies, doctrines and measures. It is integrated both at the level of the General Staff and of subordinated headquarters, and differentiated at the level of Staff categories and of the fighting units and structures within them.

The Romanian Air Force also participates in providing national security through specific missions, being that branch that: “defends the national airspace and the common airspace of the Alliance, operationalizes and maintains the operationalization of air forces and means, supports other military forces and participates in resolving emergency and intervention situations in support of civilian authorities, as well as in fulfilling international commitments” [1].

2. SHORT RETROSPECTIVE OF THE NATIONAL DEFENSE STRATEGY

The year 2015 imposed a national strategy to defend the country with the main objective of ensuring the security of its citizens, wherever they are. „A strong Romania in Europe and in the world” [2] “A strong Romania in Europe and in the world” was the desideratum of the strategy at that time, a strategy directly influenced by the behavior and actions of the Russian Federation, which culminated in 2014 with the illegal annexation of the Crimean Peninsula and the invasion of the Donbas region. These actions have determined the outline of some particularly important strategic valences for the Black Sea region, valences with direct effect, in the form of risks, dangers and threats, on the systems that manage the assurance of the level of national security of both Romania and the countries neighboring the Black Sea Basin.

Moscow's influence in the cabinets and governments of the buffer states between the Russian Federation and the European Union (Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus) does nothing but underline Russia's intentions to destabilize the regional security environment. Therefore, Romania adopts the National Defense Strategy for 2014-2019, a document that has shown that it is attached to regional geopolitical realities, and as courses of action, our country is oriented towards developing capacities and capabilities to respond to threats present in the neighboring areas and to strengthen the relations granted by the Strategic Partnership with the United States of America and by NATO and the European Union memberships.

The pillars of the strategy and the concept of national security were built to support the objectives and courses of action and were based on the necessity and need to defend the country and its citizens. However, the complexity and dynamics of the regional security environment requires updating the concept of national security, the main causes being the threats and dangers that emerged in vast and important areas such as: defense, intelligence, counterintelligence and security, in education and health and last but not least in economic, energy, financial and environmental areas.

Thus, given the wide range of threats, the numerous areas in which they made their presence felt and the fact that they are found both nationally and internationally, common directions of approach and combat were established, which required the transformation of the concept of national security, in extended national security.

With this transformation, in the military field, the importance of the collective defense concept is developed and emphasized, at national, European and within the North Atlantic Alliance, and a large part of the responsibility for consolidating the defensive position and for organizing and the development of deterrence are in the responsibility of the Ministry of National Defense.

The current "National Defense Strategy of the Country for the period 2020-2024" continues to take into account the threats and dangers identified and detailed in the old strategy and updates the current concepts and trends with new elements, establishing new courses for action to ensure the national and regional security environment.

Globally, the situation is extremely unpredictable. There are tendencies to reconfigure the relations between the great powers, fact that launches once again the competition for strategic domination, more and more states are reaffirming themselves and are trying, in their evolution, to reach the level and status of regional leader, even if they violate the rules and regulations internationally. The implementation of modern technologies increases the complexity of the security environment, and above all, the COVID-19 pandemic acts directly on the resource management area and puts the security system under pressure in all domains and areas (political, social, economic, military, education and health).

In this new picture of the security environment, Romania continues to rely, first of all, on the national defense capability, and then on a stable and consolidated position of NATO and EU member, of the strategic partnership with the USA and last but not least, on the idea of assuming the image of a stable state from a political, economic and security point of view, according to the desideratum "Together, for a safe and prosperous Romania in a world marked by new challenges." [3]

The need for the existence and exploitation of national defense capabilities, a capability that represents an integrated set of measures, characteristics and aspects related to the technique equipment, is established by the national defense strategy. It requires the development of strategies in specific areas, doctrines, orders and regulations, it underlies training plans and it influences the forms of leading military actions, so as to represent the legal and organizational framework for actions meant to ensure national security.

The role of training and use of national defense capabilities is the prerogative of the armed forces, structures with clear objectives in terms of prevention, deterrence and prevention of threats to our country, which organizes the appropriate response and interventions necessary to limit the duration or influence of a hostile military actions, preventing its transformation into a crisis or a situation of instability and insecurity.

Another important level of the need to provide national defense capabilities is the protection of population and of the national territory, of military capabilities involved in ensuring extensive national security and which must strengthen the country's strategic credibility and develop resilience.

The Romanian Air Force has an extremely important role in providing national security and the success of the modern military operations that are undertaken against the current threats. Its means of action, the technical-tactical characteristics specific to the weapon systems, the immediate and efficient reaction of the execution elements and the capacity to act together, at the branch level and together with structures from other services are established by their own strategies in accordance with the doctrines and procedures of action developed at national level and adapted to NATO and EU partners standards.

3. AIR FORCE DOCTRINE – NATIONAL SECURITY GUARANTOR

The need to provide national security implicitly generated the need to ensure the security of spaces and areas in the composition of the national territory. Thus, divided into the three geographical dimensions (land, sea and air), the national territory was distributed to ensure its security, to categories of armed forces and elements with responsibilities in the field, within the national system of defense, public order and national security.

Thus, the Romanian Air Force has the mission of “defending the national airspace with air to air and ground to air means” [4], and if necessary or on request, it can also act in “support of other branches and local authorities in emergency situations.” [4]

The mission accomplishment confers to the air force the role of protector of the airspace, and in order to obtain and maintain the control and to ensure a management of the airspace security it is necessary to approach the action directions provided by the Romanian Military Strategy - 2021, adapted to the specifics of the Air Force, directions that aim at:

- development of structures and forces involved in conducting operations in airspace;
- consolidation and permanent updating of structures, intended for early surveillance and warning;
- operationalization of the command, control, communications, computers, information, surveillance and research system (C4ISR), at tactical, operational and strategic level [5];
- maintaining the full operational capacity of air-to-air and ground-to-air combat structures designed to carry out actions to combat air threats;
- the continuous training of personnel and the maintenance of the level of training so as to be able to exploit the equipment systems in use to ensure immediate reactions and to carry out actions meant to create discouragement and panic among hostile forces;
- achieving / maintaining the full operational capacity of the multinational structures on the Romanian territory, of those made available to the North Atlantic Alliance, as a component part of the NATO Response Force, of the Initiative to increase the level of operationalization and of the EU Tactical Battlegroups [5];

- the involvement of forces and resources to support the population and central and local public administration bodies in order to reduce and eliminate the negative effects caused by the COVID-19 pandemic [5].

The accomplishment of missions by the Air Force has a direct impact on the design and deployment of military actions developed by other branches. The role that the combat structures in the composition of this category of forces have is extremely important in the management of operations at the battlefield level, and this importance is given by the independence from the physical and geographical limitations from the surface, the speed and rapidity actions are carried out in the airspace and the effective accuracy and the extreme effect in carrying out missions and eliminating threats. The dimension and variety that we encounter today in the threats and dangers that put pressure on the airspace also aim at compromising the elements responsible for providing national security, imposes a permanent update of the doctrines of all categories of forces and constantly challenges the adaptation of forces and means to the specific new challenges.

Today's strategic reality brings to the attention new, intelligent weapons and ammunitions, produced in the research laboratories of the great powers in order to determine the winning race to obtain and hold total world supremacy.

Thus, in the aerial field, the development of hypersonic missiles that can be launched from the ground level or from ships or aerial platforms opens a new chapter of aerial threats - Hypersonic Cruise Missiles - HCM (Hypersonic Cruise Missiles) [6], and in the case of the use of hypersonic air vectors, which can carry these threats through the circumterrestrial area, around the globe, the possibility of hitting strategic objectives from any area of the globe is extremely clear.

To the same extent, the development and modernization of UAVs and drones allows their increasing use in research, reconnaissance and combat missions both elements of the tactical echelon, with a direct effect on the conduct of military actions, and at the strategic level with influences the planning and organization of future military actions.

All these new and dangerous threats outline the imminence of "Massive Attacks of Disruption - M.A.D." [7], those attacks that "do not know the limitation of borders and do not make any distinction between domestic and foreign policy" [7] and can cause the start of a global conflagration.

From a geopolitical perspective, the continuation of the fight to prevent and combat the COVID-19 pandemic, together with the measures to respond to the possible energy crisis that is predicted globally, subject security systems to extreme efforts, and these cannot be planned and organized only through resilient strategies and subjective and applicable doctrines.

The coordinates of the air force doctrine are based on providing the defensive measures, necessary to maintain a higher degree of control for the airspace and, implicitly, to ensure its security and the security of the entire national space. All these measures can be implemented by the Air Force at strategic level, through forms of offensive combat such as strategic bombing, providing strategic paralysis by hitting command-control centers (C2) and by air operations with strategic effects based on strategic research and that involve all branches: aviation, artillery and ground-to-air missile subunits, radars and electronic warfare structures.

Regardless of the environment in which the target of enemy threats (land, sea or air) is located, the air force intervene through forms of response adapted to the type of threat, carrying out surveillance missions, interdiction and/or close air support and air combat, above or in the environment of the threat, ensuring superiority in the confrontation with the hostile enemy.

Consequently, the air force doctrine is extremely flexible, decisive in dealing with current threats, extremely important properties that are ensured by the characteristics of the weapon systems in the composition of the air force meant to contribute to their combat.

Thus, aviation, through its air means that define the concept of ubiquity can act anywhere and anytime, being the first force that reacts to the threat. Ground-to-air missile systems can fight threats at long distances, thus thwarting the hostile intentions of the enemy, and structures of radars and electronic warfare are the ones that discover the first possible threats and can hinder their evolutions by interfering with their control commands and electronic masking of their own objectives.

The anti-aircraft missile structures provided by the Romanian Air Force have been improved and expanded by modernizing HAWK missile systems and integrating PATRIOT missile systems, both with the capabilities which are necessary to support the AEGIS system from Deveselu military base where the NATO missile shield is implemented, a system that can be equipped with the new type of interceptor "Glide Phase Interceptor (GPI), designed to destroy the new generation of hypersonic missiles" [8].

The presence of threats such as U.A.V.s and drones is a challenge for aviation and ground-based defense systems. The use in their combat of similar systems and the development of structures endowed with such capabilities is in the attention of the decision-making structures in the field of ensuring national security, Romania starting projects aimed at the production of military drones "from the design, up to the production of parts, to the integration of all weapons systems, maintenance and training of operators"[9] that will serve these systems both from a defensive perspective, and also with missions that can be included in offensive operations.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Providing national security and safety is an extremely complex and difficult mission, and its importance is given by documents designed at the highest political level and which have effects on structures and systems at all levels of society: economic, social, education and especially military. The current complexity of the security environment imposes connections and outlines the courses of action from the general objective of the national defense strategy to the operational objectives and missions that are found in Romanian military strategy and specific doctrines of the armed forces.

The permanent adaptation to counteract and combat the types of modern threats that propagate from the airspace to elements of strategic importance from the national space, involves investments in the acquisition and modernization of combat systems, in the development of infrastructure elements and in the provision of professional maintenance of combat systems.

The strategies guidelines should define the efforts of the political class towards starting and conducting negotiations for stable partnerships and gaining economic and military support from the member nations in the alliances we have joined, developing a healthy economic and business environment to support economic effort and the allocation of more generous funds to the education sector in order to train and prepare a valuable human resource, well trained and able to act in the modern battlefield.

The national defense strategy is nothing but a great plan, built on a vision of the international geopolitical environment and its own capabilities to adapt to the characteristics of the modern battlefield.

The air force actively participates in achieving the main objective of the national strategy and through their own doctrines and their action means from strategic to tactical level support the art of organizing and conducting combat and participate decisively in providing the security climate at both national and regional and global ones.

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