

Romania Appeals to U.S. to Deter Russian Expansionism in Black Sea

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Romania has asked NATO and the U.S. to boost its military presence in the country.

Romania has called for the U.S. and NATO to boost their military presence in the Balkan country to promote stability in the Black Sea region following Russia's annexation of Crimea.

Romanian Foreign Minister Titus Corlatean stressed the importance of an enhanced, long-term U.S. presence in the Black Sea region "to deter any other destabilizing initiatives," a ministry statement published Thursday said.

Corlatean has been in Washington this week to discuss the situation in Ukraine, which neighbors Romania, with U.S. officials.

The ministry said visits by U.S. warships to Romanian Black Sea ports and joint naval, aerial and terrestrial military exercises aimed at "consolidating a collective defense dimension," should increase.

Romania, a former communist state which joined the EU in 2007, has been among the staunchest advocates of Western sanctions against Moscow after Russia annexed the Ukrainian region of Crimea.

Romanian President Traian Basescu has called for NATO to reposition its resources in the wake of Russia's military manoeuvres in recent months.

Bucharest is especially wary that its neighbor Moldova, a tiny state with a Russian-speaking minority, could be next on Moscow's agenda.

Romania and its southern neighbor Bulgaria joined NATO 10 years ago and has deployed troops and been part of Washington's military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Since the standoff between Russia and the West began over Ukraine, Romania and Bulgaria have taken part in navy drills in the Black Sea and hosted military exercises with U.S. troops.

Prime Minister Victor Ponta said Monday that Bucharest will raise its defense budget for this year by 700 million lei (\$217.41 million), or 0.2 percent of national output.

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