

24 Mar. 2016: General Breedlove, Bulboaca National Training Center, Moldova Transcript

BREEDLOVE:

Good afternoon. Minister Salaru (Shaa-LA-ru), Ambassador Pettit, members of the press, it has been wonderful to be here today and to see how our United States military is working with Moldova's military. I was honored and privileged to meet with your President during this visit, with the Ministry of Defense and to have just visited the Bulboaca Training Center, where the United States (Navy contract, no people) is supporting renovations to create a contemporary training facility. This is a great initiative to support peace and stability in this region.

Before I address my visit here any further, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the tragic events in Brussels this week. My thoughts and prayers go out to all those impacted by these horrific terror attacks. We strongly condemn these attacks and will continue to stand by Belgium, our Allies and partners to defeat these terrorists who threaten our freedoms and way of life.

Now to my visit - the security situation across Europe continues to evolve and become more and more complex. We continue to face security challenges from two directions. To the East, we face a resurgent Russia, which has voluntarily chosen to be an adversary.

To the South...Europe faces the daunting challenge of mass migration, spurred by state instability and collapse...and masking the movement of criminals, terrorists, and foreign fighters. As a result of the conflict in the region "Daesh" is spreading like a cancer, taking advantage of paths of least resistance, threatening European nations – and our own – with terrorist attacks. Its brutality is driving millions to flee from Syria, and Iraq...creating an unprecedented humanitarian challenge.

As we work with Allies and partners to respond to and overcome both of these serious threats, we stand fully behind Moldova's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Critical to Moldovan sovereignty is Moldova's National Army . I strongly support their efforts to improve the capabilities of their defense structures to counter the urgent and emergent threats in the region, and to serve as an important contributor to deterrence, and the defense of the Moldovan people.

During my visit today I encouraged them to continue building these capabilities - and work toward creating an appropriate and sustainable, military force, that is compatible with international structures. One significant concern during my discussions here is

corruption. Corruption by all accounts is the single biggest threat to Moldova's national security and must be confronted.

From my perspective and line of work, the military is an essential part of the government that is responsible and accountable to the people of the nation. Today I had the chance to talk with great young Moldovan soldiers who clearly share that vision.

Regarding European integration - it is an important moment in Moldova's history. The U.S. supports this objective, and sees your cooperation with partners such as the United States, as a means to share the responsibility of achieving our common security objectives. At the same time, the United States respects Moldova's neutrality and believes that it is Moldova's democratic choice to remain non-aligned.

We have many partners, such as Australia, Finland and Sweden, who make important contributions to international security while remaining outside of any military alliance. Moreover, we encourage all sides to respect Moldova's neutrality.

As with any sovereign state, we believe that it is important for Moldova to be able to defend itself and for it to be able to contribute to international peace keeping missions, as it has been doing for nearly two years in Kosovo.

Mr. Minister, I want to thank you for your hospitality during my visit and wish you continued success in the pursuit of your stated objective to reform and modernized the Moldovan National Army.

I look forward to questions.