

ROMANIAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS IN THE NAVAL FIELD (1975-1980)

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In the summer of 1975, the destroyer "WAINWRIGHT" of the US Navy's Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean conducted a 4-day port call at the Port of Constanta. This marked the first official courtesy visit of a US Navy vessel to a Romanian port in 49 years. The previous visit of a US vessel had been that of the "SCORPION" yacht in 1926.

The visit of a US naval vessel – the world's leading maritime power and the leader of NATO – to Romania – a member of the Warsaw Pact –, conducted almost one month after the USA and the USSR had marked 30 years since the end of World War II through a reciprocal exchange of vessels, was a significant political, diplomatic and social event, considering the time and context in which it was organized.

In the following years, until 1989, the port call at Constanta of a US naval vessel, followed by two other port calls, became an annual reference point in the US-Romanian diplomatic and military relations, despite the fact that the two states were members of alliances with fundamentally different ideologies.

Keywords: Romanian-American relations; Romanian Navy; diplomatic impact; military relationship; Warsaw Pact;

INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 1975, a high-level meeting was organised between Romania and the USA. Between 7 and 11 June 1975, Romanian President Nicolae Ceaușescu visited Mexico, but before flying back to Europe he met US President Gerald Ford in Washington on 11 July 1975. The two presidents met again at the end of the same month in Helsinki during the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. The following day after signing the *Final Act*, on 2 August 1975, the US President arrived in Bucharest for an official visit.

Between these two events, the first port call of a US Navy vessel was conducted in the Romanian port of Constanța, after 49 years after the last such visit. Before this port call, the last US Navy vessel to arrive in Constanța was the yacht “SCORPION” in 1926.

Since 1914, for more than a decade, the “SCORPION” had been stationed in Istanbul and served as the flagship of a US admiral responsible for eastern affairs.

Through diplomatic efforts, the two parties agreed to organise the first “*courtesy visit*” of a US Navy vessel deployed in the Mediterranean between 20 and 24 June 1975. The ship designated to execute this naval diplomacy event was the destroyer “WAINWRIGHT” (DLG-28). She was a “BELKNAP”-class destroyer, in service with the US Navy since 1966, and was taken under the Sixth Fleet operational control in mid-March 1975.

Between 1975 and 1989, the focal point of US-Romanian relations in the naval domain were represented by an annual program of visits by US Navy vessels to Constanta. After 1990, in a different geopolitical and geostrategic context, US-Romanian relations gradually improved and became a major component of the bilateral relationship between the two states.

We can therefore state *that the year 2025 marks 50 years of uninterrupted naval relations between Romania and the USA.*

ASPECTS OF ROMANIAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS (1970-1975)

After Romania joined the UN and normalised its relations with the USA, Romanian diplomats in New York had the opportunity to interact with their American counterparts. The diplomatic efforts of Romanian diplomats, the foreign policy principles they promoted, as well as Romania’s distinct position within

the Warsaw Pact – different from that of the alliance’s dominant power – favoured Romania’s approach to the USA.

The dynamics of diplomatic, economic and political relations between Romania and the USA took an upward turn after President Richard Nixon visited Bucharest in August 1969 (*Scînteia*, anul XXXVIII, nr. 8145 and 8146, 3 and 4 August 1969, pp. 1-2). This was the first visit by an American president to a communist state. The visit took place amid tensions between Romania and the USSR, after the Warsaw Pact forces invaded Czechoslovakia the previous year.

This was followed by Nicolae Ceaușescu’s visit to the USA between 4 and 6 December 1973. The joint political declaration signed by Richard Nixon and Nicolae Ceaușescu on 5 December 1973 expressed political and economic support for Bucharest’s foreign policy (*ib.*, no. 9713, 6 December 1973, p. 1).

Romania’s interest in obtaining substantial economic assistance from the USA – the leading power of the Western world – was immense. The discussions and negotiations held before and after August 1969, aimed at normalising and strengthening bilateral relations between the diplomats of the two countries, as well as the meetings between US Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford with Nicolae Ceaușescu, led to the signing of a series of diplomatic, cultural and economic agreements. Although carried out cautiously, but of significant importance to both sides, the military relations were accompanied by the diplomatic and economic ones.

After 1970, during bilateral negotiations, the issue of signing a military cooperation agreement was most likely raised, framed within the political context of that historical period. The USA and Romania belonged to different alliances with opposing ideologies, yet, Romania’s behaviour in its relation with the USSR, its good ties with China, and its openness to cooperation with Western states encouraged the leadership in Washington to pay greater attention to Bucharest and its communist leader. In 1974, the foundations were laid for a rapprochement between the two armed forces through the signing of a military cooperation convention (Watts, 2012, p. 693). The following year, reciprocal high-level visits represented a genuine success of the foreign policies of both countries, each pursuing different objectives.

Between 11 and 20 March 1975, the Chief of the Romanian General Staff, Colonel-General Ion Coman, accompanied by a military delegation, paid an official visit to the USA at the invitation of the US Army Chief of Staff, General Fred C. Weyand (*Scînteia*, year XLIV, no. 10126, 12 March 1975, p. 5; no. 10130, 16 March 1975, p. 4). This was the first visit to Washington by a general from a member state of the Warsaw Pact. The visit was reciprocated by General Weyand in September 1975

(*Scînteia*, year XLIV, no. 10274, 2 September 1975, p. 4; no. 10277, 5 September 1975, p. 5; no. 10278, 6 September 1975, p. 6).

The issue of a US Navy vessel visiting Constanța must have been among the topics discussed between the Americans and General Coman. Since 1970, the Pentagon, the State Department and the US Navy had sought to have at least one ship sail north of the 44° N parallel during Black Sea deployments for reasons other than a “*Silver Fox*” mission, and an official visit to Constanța offered this opportunity.

On the other hand, two years after the opening of the *Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe*, on 1 August 1975, the representatives of 35 countries signed the Final Act of Helsinki, the document that laid the foundation of the OSCE (*Official Bulletin*, no. 92, 13 August 1975). Romania was an active participant in this “*Euro-Atlantic congress*”.

Through the *Document concerning confidence-building measures and certain aspects of security and disarmament*, a number of obligations and recommendations were agreed upon, including reciprocal notification of large-scale military manoeuvres and the exchange of observers. The signatories were encouraged to promote “*invitation-based exchanges among their military personnel, including visits and military delegations.*” (ib.). Both the Americans and the Romanians viewed these “*recommendations*” as an opportunity to elevate their bilateral political and military relations to a new level under the umbrella of the OSCE, even though each side pursued different objectives.

Between 1960 and 1974, isolated American ships or groups of two or four destroyers entered the Black Sea to signal naval presence and exercise the right of freedom of navigation as part of “*Silver Fox*” missions. The duration of their stay was generally three to four days. Starting in 1968, during their presence in the Black Sea, the navigation area of American ships was limited by the State Department to latitude 43°30'N (Tănase, 2024, pp. 63-78).

In this context, in the summer of 1975, reciprocal high-level visits took place between Romania and the USA. Nicolae Ceaușescu visited Mexico (7-11 June 1975) and, before flying back to Europe, “*made a short visit to Washington*”, meeting President Gerald Ford on 11 June 1975 (*Scînteia*, year XLIV, no. 10204, Thursday 12 June 1975, p. 1). At the end of the month, the two heads of state were in Helsinki to participate in the CSCE, which concluded with the signing of the Final Act, negotiated and agreed upon by a large number of states. The signing ceremony of the “*Final Act*” took place on 1 August 1975. The next day, President Gerald Ford visited Bucharest (*Scînteia*, lb., no. 10248, 2 August 1975, p. 1; no. 10249, 3 August 1975, pp. 1-5).

Between these two events, diplomatic arrangements were made for a US ship from the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean Sea to pay a “*courtesy visit*” to Constanța between 20 and 24 June 1975. Thus, the destroyer USS “*WAINWRIGHT*” became the first American ship to visit Romania after almost 40 years (*Scînteia*, lb., no. 10212, 21 June 1975, p. 5; no. 10215, 25 June 1975, p. 3).

Another important event in the political-military relations between Romania and the USA was the visit to Bucharest of General Fred C. Weyand, from 1 to 5 September 1975 (*Scînteia*, lb., no. 10274, Tuesday 2 September 1975, p. 4.; no. 10278, 6 September 1975, p. 6), held almost a month after President Ford’s visit to the Romanian capital (*Scînteia*, lb., no. 10277, Friday 5 September 1975, p. 5). Shortly after the American General’s departure, on 8 September 1975, as the Americans were preparing the celebrations for the following year’s bicentennial of US independence, John William Middendorf II (Secretary of the Navy) sent a letter to the Chief of the General Staff, Colonel-General Ion Coman, inviting the training ship “*MIRCEA*” to an international parade organised for the occasion and to the “*race of the century*” – “*Operation Sail 1976*”.

The Romanian side accepted the invitation, and the training ship “*MIRCEA*” successfully represented Romania at the 3rd Bermuda – Newport race as part of “*Operation Sail 1976*” and at the festivities marking the bicentennial of the independence of the United States of America (Damaschin, 2006).

THE FIRST VISIT OF AN AMERICAN WARSHIP TO CONSTANȚA DURING THE COLD WAR

Romanian-American relations saw a significant improvement in 1975. For 15 years, the American naval presence in the Black Sea had been maintained through *Operation Silver Fox*. A visit by a warship to a port on the western coast of the Black Sea, namely the Romanian port of Constanța, had been considered by American diplomacy and the U.S. Navy since the autumn of 1970, as a response to Soviet actions in Cuba and as a way to extend the operational area north of the 43°30’ parallel.

While American destroyers had begun, during their patrols in the Black Sea starting in 1971, to reach points near the territorial waters of the USSR, the visit to Constanța took place in the summer of 1975. Through diplomatic arrangements, both sides agreed to schedule the “*courtesy visit*” of an American warship deployed in the Mediterranean between 20 and 24 June 1975. The ship designated for this act of naval diplomacy was the destroyer “*WAINWRIGHT*” (DLG-28). It was a “*BELKNAP*”-class guided missile destroyer leader, in service with the US Navy since

1966, which came under the operational control of the Commander of the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean in mid-March 1975.

The American destroyer received the mission to pass through the Turkish straits and, after entering the Black Sea, to head toward the port of Constanța at the beginning of June. The mission was regarded by the ship's crew as extremely important. "WAINWRIGHT" was to be the first American ship to enter the port of Constanța after 49 years (*All Hands*, 1975, p. 45).

The last visit of an American warship to Constanța had been that of the yacht "SCORPION" in 1926. Since 1914, for more than a decade, the "SCORPION" had been stationed in Istanbul and served as the flagship of a US admiral responsible for eastern affairs.

The "courtesy visit" of USS "WAINWRIGHT" began on the morning of Friday, 20 June 1975 (*Dobrogea Nouă*, 1975, p. 3). The American destroyer, commanded by Commander Eugene B. Ackerman, officially on a "cruise in the Black Sea", entered the port escorted by a Romanian naval vessel from the limit of Romanian territorial waters. After firing a 21-gun national salute, it moored at the quay of the Maritime Station in the port of Constanța.

Although time was very short, the Romanian side prepared intensely for the visit of a ship belonging to the world's greatest naval power. The training ship "MIRCEA" was designated as the host vessel, and the "Mircea cel Bătrân" Naval Institute was responsible for organising the reception of the American ship. For this purpose, "MIRCEA" was moved to a berth near the Maritime Station.



The destroyer USS "WAINWRIGHT" (DLG-28) during a mooring maneuver in the Port of Constanța. In the bow, the training ship "MIRCEA" can be seen moored at the quay.

Upon mooring, the destroyer *“WAINWRIGHT”* was welcomed on the quay by a delegation of naval officers, the American ambassador to Bucharest, Harry G. Barnes, and the US military attaché in Romania, Colonel Wyatt J. Mitchell.

Shortly after the mooring maneuver was completed, the commander of *“WAINWRIGHT”*, Commander Eugene B. Ackerman, accompanied by Harry G. Barnes and Wyatt J. Mitchell, paid a formal visit to the mayor of Constanța, Gheorghe Trandafir, and later to the training ship *MIRCEA*”, where he was received by the Commander of the Romanian Navy, Rear Admiral Sebastian Ulmeanu (Ciorbea, 1999, p. 205).

In 1975, the main naval base of the Romanian Navy was located in Mangalia. The Navy HQ, the HQs of the 42nd Maritime Division and the 29th Torpedo Boat Brigade, as well as the maritime and land units under their command, had their administrative headquarters within the Mangalia naval port. In the port of Constanța, where berth *“zero”* was under construction, a few ships belonging to the 306th Training Ship Division, subordinate to the *“Mircea cel Bătrân”* Naval Institute, were stationed, or were temporarily relocated from Mangalia for student training.

The protocol agreed upon by the two sides contained all the elements of an official courtesy visit, which later became reference points for the programs of future visits:

- greeting the American ship arriving for the visit at the entrance to territorial waters and escorting it to the port entrance by a Romanian naval vessel;
- entering the port and mooring at the berth in the morning of the first day of the visit;
- firing the national salute (21-gun salute) by the visiting ship upon entering the port. The response was given by an artillery battery positioned on the eastern breakwater/the outer breakwater;
- welcoming the ship and assisting with the mooring manoeuvre by representatives of the Romanian Navy and the US Embassy in Bucharest;
- boarding of the ambassador, the military attaché, and the liaison officer from the Romanian Navy;
- visits by the ship’s commander to the Constanța City Hall and to the Commander of the Romanian Navy (usually aboard the training ship *“MIRCEA”*);
- visits to the training ship *“MIRCEA”* and to the *“Mircea cel Bătrân”* Naval Institute by the American ship’s crew;
- visits to the American ship by groups of servicemen and civilians. On several occasions, civilian access to the American ships was restricted;

- a wreath-laying ceremony at the “Victory” Monument in the Archaeological Park of Constanța;
- sports competitions, usually volleyball and basketball matches, between teams from the ship’s crew and teams of students from the Naval Institute;
- organizing excursions for the American ship’s crew to visit Constanța and several resorts along the Romanian seaside.

The unit designated to act as host was most often the “*Mircea cel Bătrân*” Naval Institute, with the training ship “*MIRCEA*” serving as the host vessel. When “*MIRCEA*” was not present in the port, being away on training voyages, it was replaced by Hydrographic Ship 112 (formerly the gunboat “*STIHI*”).

In honour of the ship’s arrival, the US ambassador hosted a reception, usually held at the “*Cazino*” Restaurant on the Constanța seafront, though receptions were also held aboard American ships. The Romanian side, in turn, usually offered a lunch aboard the training ship “*MIRCEA*” and a return cocktail.

Beyond the political and diplomatic impact of the visit, perhaps the most important aspect was the fact that USS “*WAINWRIGHT*” was open to visitors, giving Romanian naval personnel and other citizens of Constanța the opportunity to interact with the ship’s crew and to see a large warship belonging to the world’s leading capitalist power.

The Romanian side organised a visit for the American crew aboard the training ship “*MIRCEA*”, as well as excursions to tourist sites along the Romanian Black Sea coast. Interaction between Romanian and American sailors also included friendly sports matches between the two sides. The visit of the destroyer “*WAINWRIGHT*” to Constanța ended on Tuesday, 24 June 1975 (*România Liberă*, year XXXIII, no. 9538, 25 June 1975, p. 5). This event of naval diplomacy was duly appreciated by both sides, each concluding that it was in their interest for this type of activity to continue in the years to come.

VISITS OF AMERICAN SHIPS TO CONSTANȚA IN 1976, 1977, AND 1978

During 1976, a total of five American ships entered the Black Sea. Between two periodic missions carried out by groups of two ships, an official visit to the port of Constanța took place (MacDonald, 1983, pp. 2-8). The second visit of an American ship to Romania occurred between 9 and 13 September 1976 (*Scînteia*, anul XLV, nr. 10593, 10 septembrie 1976, p. 5; nr. 10596, 14 septembrie 1976, p. 5). On the morning of 9 September 1976, the American cruiser “*HARRY E. YARNELL*”, with a crew of just over 400 sailors and commanded by Captain Richard C. Avrit, entered

the Port of Constanța, escorted by a Romanian naval vessel. Aboard the cruiser "YARNELL" was Rear Admiral Eugene J. Carroll, Jr., serving as commander of the deployment. An important military figure in the US Navy, he had, since 14 July 1975, held the positions of Task Force Commander (TF-60) and Carrier Group Commander (Carrier Group Two) within the US Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean. Within NATO's force structure, he served as Task Force Commander (TF-502) (<https://www.navysite.de/cruisebooks/cv67-77/009.htm>).

From a naval diplomacy standpoint, Admiral Carroll's presence in Constanța represented a significant moment in bilateral relations. Most likely, this initiative was motivated, among other reasons, by the fact that during the celebrations held in New York to mark the 200th anniversary of the United States Declaration of Independence, Romania was represented by the training ship "MIRCEA". While stationed in American ports, "MIRCEA" had as deployment commander Rear Admiral Gheorghe Sandu, a former Navy commander who at that time served as head of the Navy Section within the Operations Directorate of the General Staff¹.

Eugene J. Carroll was the first American admiral to visit Romania in 50 years. During the inter-war period, Rear Admiral Mark Lambert Bristol, the US High Commissioner to Turkey in Constantinople between 1919 and 1927, had visited Romania in August 1926.

For the visit of the cruiser "HARRY E. YARNELL", as in the previous year, the "Mircea cel Bătrân" Naval Institute and the ship "MIRCEA" were designated as the host unit and host ship, respectively.

At 09:00 on the morning of arrival at the Maritime Station berth, the cruiser was awaited by a delegation of Romanian authorities and by representatives of the US Embassy in Romania: the chargé d'affaires Richard Noyes Viets, the military attaché Colonel Wyatt J. Mitchell, and the naval attaché Commander Russel Fredirk. After the welcome aboard, the deployment commander, Rear Admiral Carroll, and the cruiser's commanding officer, Commander Avrit, accompanied by Richard Noyes Viets and the two American attachés, paid a courtesy visit to the mayor of Constanța, Gheorghe Trandafir. They were then received by the Commander of the Romanian Navy, Rear Admiral Sebastian Ulmeanu, aboard the training ship "MIRCEA", where he offered a luncheon to the American guests (Ciorbea, p. 244). That same afternoon, a wreath-laying ceremony took place at the Victory Monument in the Archaeological Park of Constanța, conducted by Rear Admiral Eugene Carroll, accompanied by Commander Richard Avrit (*Scînteia*, year XLV, no. 10593, 10 September 1976, p. 5).

¹ The training voyage of the training vessel "MIRCEA" in 1976 took place between 4 March and 30 August, in Valentin Ciorbea, *op.cit.*, pp. 231-243.



Commander Richard C. Avrit, commanding officer of USS "Harry E. Yarnell" (CG-17), speaking on board the ship with Romanian officers during the American ship's visit to Constanța (September 1976)

During the visit, various tours, events, meetings, and sports competitions were organised. The American admiral visited the Naval Institute and most likely was taken to other economic and tourist sites in Dobrogea. Reciprocal receptions were held aboard the training ship "MIRCEA" and the American cruiser (Ciorbea, p. 244). The American sailors visited resorts, historical monuments, and cultural-touristic objectives along the Romanian Black Sea coast. The American ship was also open to visits by civilians, Romanian military and civil authorities, and Romanian sailors every afternoon from 10 to 12 September, for two hours each day.

The cruiser "HARRY E. YARNELL" departed the port of Constanța on the morning of Monday, 13 September 1976 (*România Liberă*, year XXXIV, no. 9918, 14 September 1976, p. 5).

During 1977, the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean conducted three missions to the Black Sea: two patrols and one official visit to Constanța.

In September 1977, the US Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean sent the guided-missile destroyer "CHARLES F. ADAMS" (DDG-42) on an official visit to Constanța², marking its second presence in the Black Sea that year.

The visit (<https://www.navysite.de/dd/ddg2.htm>) took place between 8 and 12 September 1977 (*Dobrogea Nouă*, year XXX, no. 9028, 9 September 1977, p. 3; *Scînteia*, year XLVI, no. 10906, 13 September 1977, p. 3). The five-day program resembled that of the previous year: a welcome visit; protocol calls to local political and military authorities, the mayor of Constanța, the commander of the Romanian

² *Third Semiannual Report to the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, June 1, 1977 - December 1, 1977*, no. 39, December 1977, Washington D.C., p. 7.

Navy, and the commander of the Naval Institute *“Mircea cel Bătrân”*; a wreath-laying ceremony at the Victory Monument; a luncheon offered by the commander of the Romanian Navy; visits to historical monuments and tourist sites; sports competitions between ship crews; visits to the destroyer by civilians; and a cocktail reception aboard the American destroyer.

In 1978, the US Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean sent ships to the Black Sea twice. The first time, at the end of June, a cruiser and a destroyer carried out missions specific to Operation *“Silver Fox”*, and the second American presence in the Black Sea that year was an official visit to Constanța by an American cruiser at the end of November 1978.

In May 1978, American diplomacy proposed that the Silver Fox Mission in the Black Sea be carried out between 26 June and 1 July with the guided-missile cruiser *“HARRY E. YARNELL”* (CG-17) and the guided-missile destroyer *“CHARLES F. ADAMS”* (DDG-2). The mission was to be executed without a port visit (<https://ia600605.us.archive.org/23/items/StateDeptcable1978-131504/State%20Dept%20cable%201978-131504.pdf>).

According to the planned mission route, the American ships were to navigate no closer than 70 nautical miles from Romania, 50 nautical miles from Bulgaria, and 40 nautical miles from the coast of the USSR. The American ships were also scheduled to pass through training areas No. 3, 4, and 8, notified by the Soviets in the northern part of the Black Sea (Ib.).

The safety instructions established for the navigation of the American ships required them to avoid the Soviet Black Sea Fleet’s training areas if live-fire exercises were underway. To take advantage of opportunities to gather information on targets of interest, ship commanders were authorised to deviate from the planned route for more than four hours; however, the ships were not allowed to approach closer than 15 nautical miles from a coast or island, in order to avoid entering the territorial waters of any of the target countries (Ib.).

The second American naval presence in the Black Sea in 1978 took place in a particularly sensitive political climate and demonstrated political support for Romania in its relations with the USSR. USS *“BIDDLE”* (CG-34) was stationed in Constanța between 22 and 27 November 1978 for a six-day official visit to Romania (Ib.).

Romanian-American relations in 1978 were marked by three significant events: Nicolae Ceaușescu’s visit to Washington (12-17 April 1978); the granting of political asylum in the United States to Ion Mihai Pacepa (late July 1978); the *“personal*

message” from Jimmy Carter to Nicolae Ceaușescu, transmitted through the US Secretary of the Treasury during his unexpected visit to Bucharest (December 1978)³.

Ceaușescu’s visit to the United States in the spring of 1978 was considered a genuine success of Romanian foreign policy and was widely reported in the central press in Bucharest. The *“joint declaration”* on international issues and bilateral relations, issued at the conclusion of the talks between the two heads of state, reaffirmed the political and economic support of the United States for Romania (*Scînteia*, year XLVII, no. 11087 ÷ 11091, 13 ÷ 18 April 1978).

In the summer of 1978, three months after the meeting between Carter and Ceaușescu, relations between Romania and the United States entered a crisis triggered by the request for – and granting of – political asylum in the US to General Ion Mihai Pacepa, head of the Romanian foreign intelligence service, through the American Embassy in Bonn (FRG). The defection on 24 July 1978 of Pacepa, the chief of the communist regime’s spies and a close associate of the Ceaușescu family, created tensions between the Americans and the Romanians. However, it did not immediately cause the two sides to abandon their political, diplomatic, economic, or military relations. The effects appeared gradually over time.

Between 22 and 23 November 1978, the Consultative Political Committee of the Warsaw Pact held a conference in Moscow. Coincidence or not, on the very day the CPC meeting began in Moscow, USS *“BIDDLE”* docked in the port of Constanța. At this summit, Nicolae Ceaușescu opposed Marshal Kulikov’s proposals regarding increased military spending and command-and-control arrangements in the draft statute of the Unified Armed Forces for wartime. At the conclusion of the conference, it was intended that two declarations be issued: one concerning the situation in Europe and the international situation as a whole, and a second concerning the situation in the Middle East.

The Romanian delegation did not agree with the declaration on the Middle East, which aimed to issue a collective condemnation – under the aegis of the Warsaw Pact – of the Camp David Accords and Egypt’s separate peace with Israel, as well as to support the Arab states that, at their Baghdad summit, had decided to exclude Egypt from the Arab League following President Sadat’s *“betrayal”* of Arab interests.

Although Romania did not agree with a separate peace between Egypt and Israel without the participation of the other parties, it supported the Camp David

³ See: *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1977-1980*, Volume XX, *Eastern Europe*, United States Government Publishing Office, Washington, 2015, Documents 177-234, pp. 527-749.

Accords. As a result, the Warsaw Pact could not issue a common declaration on this issue, as desired by Moscow. Consequently, the declaration on the Middle East was published in the press of all other member-state capitals – except Bucharest (*Scînteia*, year XLVII, no. 11278, 24 November 1978, pp. 3-4).

This situation was perceived in Washington as a strong manifestation of Romania's independence from Moscow, revealing a new moment of tension between the leadership in Bucharest and those of the other Warsaw Pact states, especially the Soviets. This led the Carter administration to send an urgent message of support to Nicolae Ceaușescu, which arrived on 8 December 1978.

In mid-November, the guided-missile cruiser "*BIDDLE*" (CG-34) received the mission to conduct a visit to Constanța between 22 and 27 November 1978, carrying on board, as flag officer, Rear Admiral Paul D. Tomb, commander of Submarine Group 8 and commander of Mediterranean Submarine Forces (Treadway, 2005, p. 198).

On 20 November 1978, the American cruiser entered the Greek port of Piraeus (Athens), where Rear Admiral Tomb boarded. After passing through the Dardanelles and Bosphorus straits, on 21 November 1978, "*BIDDLE*" entered the Black Sea, and the next morning, Wednesday, 22 November, reached Romanian territorial waters, where it was escorted by a Romanian naval vessel to the entrance of the port of Constanța (Ib., p. 200). After rendering the national salute at the port entrance, the impressive American cruiser "*BIDDLE*" docked at the Maritime Station berth for a six-day official visit to Romania (*Scînteia*, year XLVII, no. 11277, 23 November 1978, p. 5; no. 11.281, 28 November 1978, p. 5). At the quay, the ship was greeted by a delegation of Romanian sailors and by the US ambassador to Bucharest, accompanied by the US military and naval attachés.

Immediately after mooring, the commanding officer of "*BIDDLE*", Commander John N. Ryan, accompanied by the American military attaché, Commander Richard J. Wouakh, and five officers from the crew, paid a welcome visit to the training ship "*MIRCEA*". The American officers were received by Rear Admiral Ștefan Ilie, commander of the Naval Institute. The training ship "*MIRCEA*" was moored near the Maritime Station (Ciorbea, p. 258).

The American delegation paid protocol visits to civilian and military authorities in Constanța. The American historian James A. Treadway remarked that "*Admiral Tomb, Captain Ryan, other Biddle officers, and the Defense Attaché Bucharest made official calls on a long list of Romanian dignitaries*" (Treadway, p. 200). In the Romanian press, only the protocol visits to the mayor of Constanța

and the commander of the Romanian Navy were mentioned (*Dobrogea Nouă*, year XXXI, no. 9 402, 23 November 1978, p. 4).

After the official visits to the political and military authorities, a wreath-laying ceremony took place at the Victory Monument in Constanța, carried out by Rear Admiral Paul Tomb and Commander John Ryan and attended by 40 members of the American ship's crew (Treadway, *ib.*). The Romanian side participated with a similar formation, ensuring the necessary conditions for the ceremony.

On the same day, the Romanian side offered a luncheon on board the training ship "MIRCEA", attended by Rear Admiral Paul Tomb, Commander John Ryan, Rudolph Aggrey, the US ambassador to Romania, Commander Richard J. Wouakh, the American military attaché, Commander Burton Weisman, the US naval attaché in Yugoslavia and Romania, and four other officers from the ship, representing the visitors; and by Rear Admiral Sebastian Ulmeanu, commander of the Romanian Navy, Rear Admiral Ștefan Ilie, commander of the Naval Institute, Captain (2nd rank) Dan Stăiculescu, commander of the training ship, and other officers, representing the Romanian side (Ciorbea, p. 258).

During the other five days of the "BIDDLE" cruiser's stay in the port of Constanța, various meetings, sports competitions, visits, and protocol activities took place (*"There was a reception; There were tours and general sightseeing in the city as well as numerous luncheons, sport competitions and cocktails"*) (Treadway, *ib.*). The Romanian press only mentioned that *"the American sailors visited historical monuments and cultural-tourist sites on the Romanian Black Sea coast"* (*Scînteia*, year XLVII, no. 11281, 28 November 1978, p. 5).

We do not have information on whether the "BIDDLE" cruiser was opened for visits by the civilian population, but we believe this did not happen in December 1978, since such a protocol event would have generated major interest and would likely have been mentioned in the ship's monograph. It is possible that the Romanian side did not agree to such an activity, given that only a few months earlier the Pacepa event had taken place, creating major tension between Romanians and Americans. Nonetheless, "BIDDLE" was visited by groups of Romanian sailors and by local political and military officials, and receptions and cocktails were organised on board, attended by officials and other Romanian naval officers.

On Monday morning, 27 November 1978, after the farewell protocol visit carried out on board the training ship "MIRCEA", "BIDDLE" performed the unmooring manoeuvre and departed from the port of Constanța, leaving Romanian territorial waters and heading toward the Bosphorus Strait (Treadway, *ib.*).

Ten days later, on Thursday, 8 December 1978, Michael Blumenthal, the US Secretary of the Treasury, “the envoy of the President of the US,” arrived in Bucharest to deliver a “personal message” from President Carter to Nicolae Ceaușescu (*Scînteia*, year XLVII, no. 11287, 5 December 1978, p. 4; no. 11289, 7 December 1978, p. 6). After landing at Otopeni Airport, the American official told the press: “I came to Romania at President Carter’s request to reaffirm to the Romanian people and to President Ceaușescu the importance we attach to **Romania’s independence and to Romanian-American friendship.**” (Ib., no. 11290, 8 December 1978, p. 5; no. 11291, 9 December 1978, p. 5; no. 11292, 10 December 1978, pp. 1; 5; The Washington Post, 9 December 1978; The New York Times, 10 December 1978).

“BIDDLE”’s visit to Constanța was considered by both sides a success (“significant diplomatic event”)” (Treadway, Ib.) It can also be seen as support offered to Nicolae Ceaușescu by American diplomacy in his dispute with the Soviet leadership in Moscow.

THE FIRST VISIT OF A GROUP OF TWO US NAVY WARSHIPS TO CONSTANȚA (1979)

Starting in the summer of 1979, the US Navy began making visits to Constanța with two ships (“multi-ship US Navy visit to Constanța”). Typically, these visits involved a cruiser and a destroyer serving with the US Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean. This change can be seen as an increased display of the United States’ interest in the Black Sea region.

Maintaining a military relationship with Romania at a high diplomatic level, under the umbrella of the Confidence-Building Measures contained in the Helsinki Final Act, gave the United States the opportunity to continue showing support for Romania’s position within the Warsaw Pact, even though tensions existed between Washington and Bucharest regarding human rights issues in Romania, the granting of political asylum to the former head of the Foreign Intelligence Directorate of the Securitate, General Mihai Pacepa, and the level of economic exchanges (the annual renewal of the “most favored nation” clause)⁴.

The first visit to Constanța with two ships took place in June 1979, the two ships being the cruiser “*RICHMOND K. TURNER*” (CG-20) and the destroyer “*LAWRENCE*”

⁴ “Two U.S. Navy ships visited Constanta, Romania, from June 22 – 25, 1979 [correct dates 18-25 author’s note.]. In addition, two U.S. Army War College students visited Poland, Hungary, and Romania during September and October 1979”. Cf. United States Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, *Seventh Semiannual Report by the President to the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe on the Implementation of the Helsinki Final Act*, June 1, 1979 – November 30, 1979, Special report no. 62, 1979, Washington D.C., p. 9.

(DDG-4)⁵. On this occasion, the commander of the group was Rear Admiral William M. Callaghan Jr., the commander of the US Navy's Mediterranean Air Fleet.

For the cruiser "RICHMOND K. TURNER", this was its third and final entry into the Black Sea, and for the destroyer Lawrence, it was the only time it ever sailed in the Black Sea. Both American ships visited Romania only on this occasion. The two American ships stayed in Constanța for seven days. They arrived on the morning of Monday, 18 June, and departed on the morning of Monday, 25 June 1979 (*Scînteia*, year XLVIII, no. 11.453, Tuesday 19 June 1979, p. 5; no. 11.459, Tuesday 26 June 1979, p. 5; *Dobrogea Nouă*, year XXXII, no. 9578, Tuesday 19 June 1979, p. 4). This was the longest stay of US Navy ships in Romania during the period 1975-1990. They entered the Black Sea not for other dedicated missions, but solely to sail from Istanbul to Constanța and back, and to remain in the port of Constanța.

"TURNER" and "LAWRENCE" were met at the pier by officials from the United States Embassy in Bucharest and by representatives of the Romanian Navy. Some of them boarded the ships for the welcome visit: "When the two ships tied up at the pier, crewmen found their quarterdecks busy with visitors, among them, American Ambassador ... Rudolph Aggrey"⁶.

Most likely, the American crews had the opportunity to see the training ship "MIRCEA", either in port or outside the port, since it departed that same day for its annual training voyage in the Mediterranean and for official visits to the ports of Istanbul, Livorno, Lisbon, and Piraeus (18 June – 28 July 1979).

At that time, the Romanian Navy did not have combat ships in the port of Constanța, and the Navy Command was still located in Mangalia. In the port were the ships and diver boats of the Diving Center, and the hydrographic ship 112 (formerly the gunboat "Lt. Cmdr. Eugen STIHI") of the Maritime Hydrographic Directorate. Given this situation, the new diver boats were designated to carry out the mission of greeting the American ships upon entry into Romanian territorial waters and escorting them into the port, as well as guiding them upon departure, from the port to the exit from Romanian territorial waters. This practice became permanent for both American ships and other foreign naval vessels visiting Constanța in the following period.

As in previous years, the host unit from the Romanian Navy responsible for organizing and coordinating the visit of the American ships was the "Mircea cel Bătrân" Naval Institute. Starting the following year, however, commanders of the US

⁵ "18 June: The Sixth Fleet Ships Richmond K. Turner (CG 20) and Lawrence (DDG 4) began the first multi-ship U.S. Navy visit to Constanta, Romania". Cf. *Naval and Maritime Events, 1979*.

⁶ Lt. Mark E. Brender, *Romania Visit: The Celery Stumped Them. American Sailors Spend Seven Days in Romania in All Hands*, Magazine of the U.S. Navy, 57th year of publication, No. 756, January 1980, pp. 13 – 16.

Sixth Fleet holding the rank of Vice Admiral began visiting Constanța, and the host unit was designated as the 42nd Maritime Division, a large unit whose commander's position was assigned the rank of Vice Admiral. The vessel used to receive the American officials arriving for the visit was the hydrographic ship 112, replacing the training ship "MIRCEA" when the latter was in the port of Constanța and not away on its annual training voyage.



US Navy vessels moored in the Port of Constanța

After the ships moored, the commander of the cruiser "TURNER", Commander Roger O. Simon, and the commander of the destroyer "LAWRENCE", Captain Commander Leo Anthony Cangianelli, were received on board the hydrographic ship 112 for the welcome visit by the commander of the Naval Institute, Rear Admiral Ștefan Ilie.

On the same day, Rear Admiral Callaghan, accompanied by the commanders of the two ships, Ambassador Rudolph Aggrey, and other American officers, paid protocol visits to the mayor of Constanța, the commander of the Romanian Navy, Rear Admiral Ioan Mușat, and the commander of the "Mircea cel Bătrân" Naval Institute, Rear Admiral Ștefan Ilie (*Scînteia*, year XLVIII, no. 11453, Tuesday 19 June 1979, p. 5; *Dobrogea Nouă*, year XXXII, no. 9578, Tuesday 19 June 1979, p. 4.). Most likely, on the day of arrival, the Romanian side hosted a luncheon.

On the afternoon of 18 June 1979 or the following day, a wreath-laying ceremony took place at the Victory Monument in Constanța, conducted by Rear Admiral William M. Callaghan Jr., accompanied by the two ship commanders. The ceremony involved detachments of Romanian and American sailors (Ib.).

Press releases in the Romanian media regarding the visit of the American ships were, as usual, brief, mentioning only a few aspects (*Scînteia*, year XLVIII, no. 11.453, Tuesday 19 June 1979, p. 5; no. 11.459, Tuesday 26 June 1979, p. 5). While in 1975 the American Navy's press featured only a short note about the visit of the cruiser "WAINWRIGHT" (DLG-28), this time, for the first time, the visit of the Sixth Fleet ships to Constanța was described in the most popular publication of the US Navy ("*All Hands*": Magazine of the U.S. Navy) (Brender, Ib.).

An important element of the visit program was the agreement to allow the civilian population of Constanța and Romanian Navy sailors to visit the cruiser "RICHMOND K. TURNER" and the destroyer "LAWRENCE", based on approximately 2,000 tickets made available by the Americans through the Romanian authorities. Romanians showed great interest, which made a strong impression on the Americans.



The flyer provided by the ship's crew to Romanian visitors



Aspects of the wreath-laying ceremony

Among the other protocol activities, one can mention the reception held on board the two ships, attended by 65 guests – local political and military officials, including the mayor of Constanța and the commander of the Romanian Navy, as well as "other local VIPs". Representatives of the American embassy in Bucharest and their invited guests were also present. During the reception, the atmosphere was enlivened by "The Hurricanes", the band of the "TURNER"'s crew.

For the first time, the command of the U.S. Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean sent its musical group, the "Diplomats", to Constanța on a special military transport. They performed

concerts at the “*Mircea cel Bătrân*” Naval Institute and at the headquarters of the 9th Mechanized Infantry Division “*Mărășești*”. These activities were well appreciated by both Romanians and Americans. This type of activity became a regular feature in the program of visits in the following years.

For six days, the sailors followed a schedule that included official activities, sports competitions, organised tours, and visits around the city of Constanța and the seaside resort of Mamaia⁷.

The impressions of the crew members of the two ships regarding their visit to Romania, recorded in the article published in the US Navy magazine, are noteworthy (Ib.):

„I never thought I'd ever see a Communist country”.

„When I went ashore, I didn't really know what to expect or how the people would treat me”.

„As it turned out, the Romanians were really curious about our ship and our perceptions of their country”.

„At first, they were a bit standoffish and didn't know how to approach us”.

„Things were pretty controlled by the Romanian Navy and government security officials”.

„We've always been told that sailors are ambassadors of good will for our country. When you visit a country like Romania and wear your uniform ashore, you can see just how important we really are in helping our government make friends around the world”.

The cruiser “*RICHMOND K. TURNER*” (CG-20) and the destroyer “*LAWRENCE*” (DDG-4) departed from the port of Constanța on the morning of Monday, 25 June 1979, assisted during the unmooring manoeuvre by Romanian and American officials (*Scînteia*, year XLVIII, no. 11.459, Tuesday 26 June 1979, p. 5). This was the longest period that US Navy warships remained in the port of Constanța during the entire Cold War (8 days).

⁷ The Romanian press release states that: “*During their stay in our country, the crew members of the two ships visited historical monuments and cultural-tourist sites in the city of Constanța and along the Romanian Black Sea coast*”. *Scînteia*, year XLVIII, no. 11.459, Tuesday 26 June 1979, p. 5. The article by the American officer in All Hands describes the activities of the crews as follows: “*While some of the Navymen toured museums, Greek and Roman ruins, and a winery, others chose to watch a folk show, dine at tempting restaurants, and talk with English and Irish tourists at Western-style discotheques. The resort area, state-owned and managed, attracts tourists from all over Europe. During the height of the season, the resort hotels accommodate almost 50,000 visitors. About 75 retired Americans live in Romania and, according to the American Embassy in Bucharest, about 28,000 U.S. tourists visited last year. Even with all the English-speaking tourists, many signs and menus are printed in still other languages. During the seven-day stay, the beautiful resort beaches of Mamaia enticed many swimmers and sunbathers. Enjoying 85-degree temperatures, the American sailors found the beach their favorite liberty spot....Before their visit to Constanta ended, the Americans joined men from the Romanian Navy in soccer, basketball and volleyball games.*”, Ib.



Aspects of the visits to the American warships

One month later, the cruiser “*RICHMOND K. TURNER*” successfully launched the US Navy’s new missile, the well-known Harpoon, in the Gulf of Sidra. The missile hit and destroyed a naval target at a distance of 78 nautical miles (126 km). The *TURNER* was the first US Navy ship deployed to carry out a launch of this type of missile (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_Richmond_K._Turner).

Starting in the summer of 1979, the destroyer *CARON* (DD-970), equipped with advanced intelligence-gathering systems, primarily in the electromagnetic spectrum, was sent to the Black Sea. In the second half of 1979, *CARON* carried out two missions in the Black Sea. During its first deployment, from 1-6 August 1979, it was accompanied by the destroyer “*FARRAGUT*” (DDG-37), and during the second deployment, from 12–16 October 1979, it was accompanied by the frigate “*MACCANDLESS*” (FF-1084)⁸.

CONCLUSIONS

Between 1975 and 1978, one US Navy warship visited Constanța each year, and in the following ten years, the annual visit was carried out by a group of two ships.

The opening established in 1975 had an important impact on US-Romanian relations. Naval diplomacy, exercised by each side through the visit of American ships to a Warsaw Pact country and through Romania’s reception of vessels from the world’s greatest maritime power and the undisputed leader of Western democracies, played a significant role.

⁸ “The *Caron* (DD 970) and the *Farragut* (DDG 37) entered the Black Sea for five days of routine operations in international waters. The Associated Press reported that while they were in the Black Sea, Soviet aircraft, including the *Backfire* bomber, simulated missile attacks on the two Sixth Fleet ships.” Cf. *Naval and Maritime Events 1979*.

This type of relationship between the US and socialist Romania, even if formally placed under the umbrella of the CSCE, gradually developed and survived political tensions between the two states, including the US granting asylum to General Mihai Pacepa, one of the leaders of the Romanian “*Securitate*” (1978), and the granting/waiving of the most-favored-nation clause in the context of human rights violations by the Bucharest regime (1988).

At least for the period 1975-1978, with regard to US relations with East European countries, whether members of the Warsaw Pact or not, American diplomacy considered that most “*military exchanges*” took place with Romania⁹.

For each annual visit to Romania of US Sixth Fleet ships from 1976-1989, the US Navy was represented by an admiral; on several occasions, this was the fleet commander himself. In total, 11 admirals represented the US Navy during naval diplomacy activities in Constanța.

Of the eight commanders of the US Sixth Fleet during this period, five visited Constanța: Vice Admirals William H. Rowden (1982 and 1983), Edward H. Martin (1984), Frank Kelso II (1985 and 1986), Kendall E. Moranville (1988), and James D. Williams (1989). As can be seen, Vice Admirals Rowden and Kelso visited Romania twice, in consecutive years. The other six American admirals who set foot on Romanian soil were Rear Admirals Eugene J. Carroll, Jr. (1976), Paul D. Tomb (1978), William M. Callaghan Jr. (1979), Joseph Metcalf III (1980), Henry C. Mustin (1981), and Roger F. Bacon (1987).

In conclusion, naval diplomacy activities had a significant impact on bilateral relations, facilitating communication and cooperation between the two states despite political tensions and the geopolitical context of the Cold War. Moreover, the visits represented an essential element of US naval diplomacy, strengthening the position of the United States in its relations with socialist Romania and contributing to the maintenance of established contacts despite a tense political context.

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