

## ASPECTS OF THE ACTIVITY OF THE 9<sup>TH</sup> MECHANISED BRIGADE “MĂRĂȘEȘTI”, REFLECTED IN THE ROMANIAN MASS MEDIA

Prof. Costin SCURTU, PhD

„King Ferdinand I” National Military Museum,  
Constanța branch

DOI: 10.55535/RMT.2023.4.33

*The 9<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Brigade “Mărășești” is a mechanised infantry brigade belonging to the Romanian Land Forces. Its primary mission is to maintain stability and balance in the Black Sea region. The brigade operates in the Dobrogea province, which has an important geostrategic location in the area, serving as the NATO and EU border with the East. The brigade is the successor of the combat traditions of the Active Dobrogea Division, established on 1 November 1878. From 1902, it was known as the 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, with its garrison located in Constanța. As part of the Romanian Army’s transformation strategy, the 9<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Brigade “Mărășești” took control of all units in Dobrogea from the former 34<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Brigade. On 13 September 2023, in recognition of the professionalism and the role of the Dobrogean brigade, 58 representatives of the member states of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe visited the 9<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Brigade “Mărășești”. This visit aimed to promote mutual transparency and was organised according to the provisions of the 2011 Vienna Document, which aims to increase confidence and security in Europe. This article highlights significant aspects of the Brigade’s activity, in the context of the 145 years of its existence.*

*Keywords: 9<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Brigade “Mărășești”; Romanian Army; NATO; Dobrogea; Black Sea;*

### INTRODUCTION

The capacity of a state to use its military potential, following the policy of defence and promotion of national interests, gives the dimension of military power. The following can be used as indicators: the training level of the staff; response time to requests; ability to project and support forces in different theatres of operations, including outside national borders; its level of deterrence; result of the comparative analysis between own weapon systems and the most important ones worldwide (Orzeață, 2004, pp. 37-39).

The 9<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Brigade “Mărășești” is a large mechanised infantry unit of the Romanian Land Forces, continuing the fighting traditions of the Dobrogea Active Division, established on 1 November 1878. From 1903, by Order 15, it will bear the name 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, with the garrison in Constanța<sup>1</sup>. Under this name, the Division participated in all the military campaigns of the Romanian Army in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The very special contribution to the success of large-scale confrontations has designated it as one of the great basic ground units of the Romanian Army.

The Dobrogean division went through several changes over time, becoming the 9<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Division “Mărășești” and, finally, the 9<sup>th</sup> Combined Operational Command “Dobrogea”<sup>2</sup>. In the program of reorganisation and integration into NATO structures, the 34<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Brigade “Vasile Lupu”, a military structure from Constanța county, was disbanded in 2004, the remaining units passing to the Light Infantry Brigade, in the Clinceni garrison<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Starting from 2017, with the endorsement of the Historical Service of the Armed Forces, the Chief of the General Staff approved that the 9<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Brigade “Mărășești” assumed the military traditions of the Active Division, established on 1 November 1878. *Brigada 9 Mecanizată “Mărășești” își dezvăluie secretele. Despre ce este vorba!*, in “Telegraf online”, 28 October 2018, <https://www.telegrafonline.ro/brigada-9-mecanizata-marasesi-isi-dezvaluie-secretele-despre-ce-este-vorba>.

<sup>2</sup> On 1 August 2000, the new organisational states of the Maritime Fleet Command, the River Flotilla Command and the 9<sup>th</sup> Combined Operational Command “Dobrogea” came into force. All major units and units subordinated to the 9<sup>th</sup> Army Corps, except the 301<sup>st</sup> Military Police Company and the 34<sup>th</sup> Transmission Battalion, which remained under the command of the Naval Forces General Staff, came under the 1<sup>st</sup> Territorial Army Corps.

<sup>3</sup> On the former location of the 34<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Brigade “Vasile Lupu”, near the Mihail Kogălniceanu airport.

## 9<sup>TH</sup> MECHANISED BRIGADE MĂRĂȘEȘTI – HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND MISSIONS

The area of Dobrogea, located near the Black Sea, facilitates quick access to the turbulent areas in the East. In this context, Romania must develop its partnership with the USA to create a network of small advanced operational bases, to be present everywhere and to intervene wherever needed (Băhnăreanu, 2005, p. 39). Thus, the American military bases were installed on the territory of our country at the Mihail Kogălniceanu air base, in the Babadag range and the port of Constanța.

NATO and the European Union’s enlargement to the Black Sea requires new approaches, in which the Alliance manages security issues, and the EU is responsible for the economic development of the mentioned area. Starting from 2006, in Romania, the conscription method was stopped and soldiers were recruited voluntarily. A major effect was the substantial reduction of the strength of the military institution, as well as the increase in the level of professionalisation of the military personnel according to the requirements of interoperability with the armies of the NATO member states (Duțu, 2012, p. 48).

On 25 February 2008, the departure ceremony of the FND XVI Romanian National Forces Detachment took place in the Babadag garrison, commanded by Major Marius Gheorghescu, which participated, between 28 February and 15 September 2008, in the International Peacekeeping Force in Kosovo/KFOR. They carried out missions specific to peace support operations (PSO) to maintain stability/security and ensure freedom of movement: fixed/mobile traffic control points, research patrols, presence/security patrols, observation posts, escorting humanitarian convoys, guarding and security of vital perimeters (objectives). Following the Transformation Strategy of the Romanian Army, the 34<sup>th</sup> Brigade was reactivated, on 1 November 2009, as the 9<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Brigade “Mărășești”, thus taking control over all units in Dobrogea from the former 34<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Brigade<sup>4</sup>. New subunits were created, such as the 911 Infantry and 912 Tank battalions,

<sup>4</sup> When the 9<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Brigade was established, there was no position for a military priest. On 15 November 2013, the military priest Bogdan-Tudor Gavrilă was appointed. *Capela Batalionului logistic Pontul Euxin-Constanța*, in “*Arhiepiscopia Tomisului*”, 31 January 2022, <https://arhiepiscopiatomisului.ro/2022/01/31/capela-batalionului-logistic-pontul-euxin-constanta/>.

the latter equipped with T-55 tanks and Flakpanzer Gepard<sup>5</sup>. Thus, the history of this military unit in Constanța continued, in 2009, by establishing the Command of the 9<sup>th</sup> “Mărășești” Mechanised Brigade, with Brigadier General Vasile Hermeneanu as its commander<sup>6</sup>.

From its establishment until now, the 9<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Brigade “Mărășești”, a large tactical unit of land forces belonging to the 2<sup>nd</sup> “Getica” Infantry Division, maintains and develops its level of operational capacity by carrying out all national and multinational training activities, in the places of disposition at peace, in national training ranges/grounds, outside the country and in theatres of operations, to be ready, within the stipulated terms, to fulfil their specific tasks of national defence, collective defence in an allied context and within the SEEBRIG initiative<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> The crew of a battle tank needs quite a long training job to reach the standard of training and because, with the decommissioning of “18” tanks, the servicemen either detached to other units or quit the army, currently, it is difficult to find specialists in this field. In the yard of the Murfatlar unit, there are or will be brought combat means developed on the TR 55 platform (tanks that were in the composition of the former Battalion 18) and, apparently, the Gepard anti-aircraft system, composed of two rapid guns mounted on the tank chassis Leopard 1. This system was imported second-hand from Germany several years ago and, although it is not part of the last generation of such systems, it is considered one of the most effective weapons in air and ground combat. Besides, the Cheetah could be admired on the Open Doors Day, at the headquarters of the 9<sup>th</sup> Brigade in Constanța. Martinescu, D., *Armata Dobrogei, reactivată după șase ani de repaus*, in “*Romania Liberă*”, 11 May 2010, <https://archive.ph/20130615184430/http://www.romanalibera.ro/actualitate/locale/armata-dobrogei-reactivata-dupa-sase-ani-de-repaus-186071.html#selection-851.1-851.52>.

<sup>6</sup> Brigadier General Vasile Hermeneanu took the following positions: reconnaissance platoon commander (1978-1984); reconnaissance company commander (1984-1986); infantry battalion commander (1988-1990); chief of staff /34<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Regiment – Topraisar (1990-1995); chief of staff/34<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Brigade – Topraisar (1995-2000); deputy commander/34<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Brigade – Topraisar (2000-2001); head of operations/9<sup>th</sup> Operational Command “Dobrogea” – Constanța (2001-2003); chief of staff/9<sup>th</sup> Operational Command “Dobrogea” – Constanța (2003-2005); head of operations/2<sup>nd</sup> Joint Operational Command – Buzău (2005-2007); commander of 34<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade “Vasile Lupu” – Bucharest (2007-2009); commander of the 9<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Brigade “Mărășești” – Constanța (2009-2013); Brigadier General (r.) (01.12.2013). “*Clubul Amiralilor*” Association, <https://www.clubulamiralilor.ro/general-de-brigada-r-dr-vasile-hermeneanu/>.

<sup>7</sup> About 50 specialists in communications and IT, contract soldiers, warrant officers, non-commissioned officers and officers from the SEEBRIG Company of the 34<sup>th</sup> Transmission Battalion, subordinate to the 9<sup>th</sup> Operational Command “Dobrogea”, showed their professional value during the multinational exercise “*Viking 2003*”. Preparatory activities were carried out in communication and IT issues in Constanța and Bucharest. The Constanța broadcasters successfully carried out the materialisation of the communications and IT scheme. They provided the telephone network, the commercial telephone connection, the computer networks, the Internet connection. Solving the technical problems was possible due to the level of training of the SEEBRIG Company’s transmission specialists. Paul, L., “*Viking 2003*” și transmisioniștii Companiei SEEBRIG, in *Observatorul militar*, no. 1, 07-13 January 2004, <http://www.presamil.ro/OM/2004/01/pag%2021.htm>.

## LAND TROOPS TRAINING IN MULTINATIONAL EXERCISES – COMPLEXITY AND PRO-ACTION

❖ The 341<sup>st</sup> Infantry Battalion “Constanța”, nicknamed the “White Sharks”, with the garrison in Topraisar, is the most experienced unit of the Dobrogean brigade, with numerous international deployments, including in Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq. After the 34<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Brigade<sup>8</sup> was reorganised in 2004, the “White Sharks” Battalion maintained the highest training and was the only military unit based in Dobrogea during 2004-2009.

*The “White Sharks” executed a tactical march in the Muratan Mound area near Biruința, where the biggest skirmishes in the Dobrogea area took place in the First World War: “The officers and soldiers of the 40<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment requested to bring their flag to the trenches. Under the rain of shells, while the music played <Wake up, Romanians!>, they all took an oath on the flag promising that they would not retreat in the face of the fierce enemy. And they would remain true to their word!”, says Lieutenant Alexandru Călin from the 9<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Brigade “Mărășești”.*

❖ In 2017, 18 international exercises took place in the Black Sea region, in which approximately 40,000 soldiers participated, *Saber Guardian 2017/SG17* being the largest and most complex of them. These exercises aim to demonstrate the superior joint and multinational capabilities of the US, allies and partners and highlight their cohesion, unity and solidarity to defend against any aggression<sup>9</sup>. The multiplication of space military actors is an important characteristic of this first half of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in the area of the Black Sea area, in the context where new technologies and military equipment represent a key factor in the conduct of the new type of war<sup>10</sup>, in maintaining and consolidating a military power credible and able to counter the new security threats (Băhnăreanu, p. 11). After the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, NATO took far-reaching defensive measures on the borders with Russia, strengthening the presence of military troops in the region.

<sup>8</sup> On 9 May 1995, in Topraisar, the ceremony of handing over the new battle flag of the 34<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade took place.

<sup>9</sup> *Saber Guardian 2017 (SG17)*, the largest exercise held in the region of our country, in which 25,000 military personnel from 22 allied and partner countries participated. The exercise was led by the United States Land Forces in Europe (USAREUR) and took place between 11-20 July 2017 in Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary. *Saber Guardian 2017*, in *Observatorul Militar*, no. 28/12-18 July 2017, pp. 4-5.

<sup>10</sup> On 1 April 2006, the traditional name of artillery divisions was changed to artillery battalions. Today, just as in the Western armies, in the Romanian Armed Forces, the term artillery means more than a simple cannon or howitzer, by artillery we mean a set of artillery systems.

In 1991, the Polish journalist Ryszard Kapuściński said that “Ukraine’s future will unfold in two directions: relations with Russia and relations with Europe, with the world. Both are needed for the future to be favourable” (Tchernoff-Horovitz, 2022). The Russian-Ukrainian war, which began on 24 February 2021, would change relations in this part of Europe.

The Romanian soldiers participating in the various exercises are part of the units of the 9<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Brigade “Mărășești” (341<sup>st</sup> Infantry Battalion “Constanța”, 911<sup>th</sup> Infantry “Capidava” Battalion, 912<sup>th</sup> Tanks “Scythia Minor” Battalion, 114<sup>th</sup> Tanks “Petru Cercei” Battalion and 168<sup>th</sup> Battalion Logistic Support “Pontus Euxinus”). It should be remembered that the American soldiers come from the detachments deployed in Romania as part of the measures to strengthen the allied position on the entire eastern flank of NATO, as a defensive formula to ensure the security of the allies and to deter aggressive actions in the Black Sea region. The purpose of the combat exercise was to demonstrate the ability to react to the action of an opponent, based on a fictitious scenario.

❖ The multinational exercise “Justice Eagle” organised by the 9<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Brigade “Mărășești”, which takes place annually, based on a unique scenario, on the territory of Romania, aims to harmonise and increase the interoperability of the NATO member armed forces, maintaining the deployment and training capability jointly by exercising related logistical support, as well as developing a regional environment favourable to multinational military cooperation (Măndiță, 2022).

At the Mechanised Brigade “Mărășești” Command, on 5 May 2022, the military and religious ceremony organized on the occasion of the repatriation of the Anti-Aircraft Defense Detachment, rotation X, from the theatre of operations in Poland took place<sup>11</sup>. The Land Forces Chief of Staff, Major General Iulian Berdilă, and representatives of the Joint Forces Command, 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division “Getica” took part in the activity. Representatives of the local public authorities were also present, according to the press release of the 9<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Brigade “Mărășești” (Avram, 2022).

❖ Hundreds of Romanian soldiers of the 9<sup>th</sup> Dobrogean Brigade and the American partners from the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Air Assault), with over 100 technical means of combat, fired with live ammunition in the Secondary Combat Training Centre in Babadag, Tulcea county. They organised and executed the *Mărășești 22.2 exercise*. After intense planning and preparation, the final phase of the exercise took

<sup>11</sup> *Ceremonialul de repatriere a Detașamentului “GHEPARZII DE FIER”, in “România Internațional”, 3 May 2022, [https://www.rri.ro/ro\\_ro/ceremonialul\\_de\\_repatriere\\_a\\_detasamentului\\_gheparzii\\_de\\_fier-2660318](https://www.rri.ro/ro_ro/ceremonialul_de_repatriere_a_detasamentului_gheparzii_de_fier-2660318).*

place on 20 October, in the presence of the Land Forces Chief of Staff, Major General Iulian Berdilă, and the Commander of the 2<sup>nd</sup> “Getica” Infantry Division, Major General Ciprian Marin, of commanders of Dobrogea units and representatives of local public authorities (Lupu, 2022). *“We can train together and see how each one plans and executes operations. For the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, coming to Romania is essential to ensure that our partnership is strong enough to defend NATO’s eastern flank. The presence here is very beneficial in terms of preparation to strengthen our firm partnership and commitment to defend our NATO allies”,* communicated the commander of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the 502<sup>nd</sup> Regiment, Lieutenant Colonel Dave Williams<sup>12</sup>.

“Mărășești” exercise takes place annually on the territory of Romania. The Ministry of National Defence shows that its objectives are to improve the skills regarding the use of the equipment and equipment, to increase the capacity of resistance and action to effort in a hostile operational environment. *“Also, through such military exercises, the aim is to improve the reaction capacity in scenarios as close as possible to the reality of the battlefield, as well as to increase interoperability with the strategic partner deployed at the 57<sup>th</sup> Air Base in Mihail Kogălniceanu<sup>13</sup>, maintaining the capability of joint deployment and training by exercising related logistical support and developing a favourable regional environment for multinational military cooperation”,* as specified by sources from the MoND. (Gavrilaș, 2022).

At the Mărășești 22.2 exercise, *“The soldiers from the brigade showed a high level of professionalism, they showed once again that the experience in different theatres of operations was fully fruitful and a smooth transition was achieved between the experienced soldiers and the newcomers. I am satisfied with the level reached”,* concluded Colonel Adrian Costaru, commander of the 9<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Brigade “Mărășești” (Lupu, 2022).

<sup>12</sup> The US 502<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment was established shortly after the US entry into World War II as part of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division Screaming Eagles, one of the most decorated units in the US Army. The regiment was disbanded in 1945, to be reactivated in 1956. It fought in the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, the Iraq War, and the Afghanistan War. Starting in July 2022, American soldiers from the 502<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment are deployed to Mihai Kogălniceanu.

<sup>13</sup> The base was abolished in April 2004, following the retirement of the MiG-29, becoming an annexe to 86<sup>th</sup> Air Base. On 1 May 2007, the Mihail Kogălniceanu airfield was established, with the mission of coordinating aeronautical activities in the area of responsibility. On 1 July 2018, the status of operation of the 57<sup>th</sup> Air Base in Mihail Kogălniceanu, a structure subordinate to the General Staff of the Naval Forces, entered into force. US forces began using the base in 1999.

To understand the complexity of ground troops training, let us remember that the exercise, planned and coordinated by marine infantrymen, took place in three action environments: naval, land and air. According to the scenario, the military actions aimed to secure and defend critical infrastructure objectives against enemy airborne forces and reconnaissance-diversion groups supported by local paramilitary forces. The training objectives of the exercise were aimed at increasing the level of training and interoperability in a multinational training environment, training the command and staff element in planning and conducting riverine tactical actions, improving the collective skills of marine infantry subunits in the execution of riverine tactical actions as an amphibious landing, ensuring fluvial logistical support. *“Despite the exercise being conducted in harsh weather conditions with a significant drop in temperature, it proved to be a rigorous endurance test for the participants, given the unfavourable environment specific to the Delta”,* as stated by the Naval Forces in their official statement<sup>14</sup>.

❖ Military exercises in Tulcea county were also held in the context of Russia occupying Snake Island, at the end of February 2021. In the same year, an exercise from the “Danube Protector” series was held on the Danube and the Măcin arms aimed at exercising the landing in Dobrogea, combined with a CBRN attack. The main objective of the exercise is to strengthen the skills of the military for the execution of tactical actions to counter an air-mobile landing, in the conditions of hybrid-type threats and risks of CBRN attacks.

❖ On 5 April 2022, an exercise was carried out that included sequences of rejection and neutralization of enemy reconnaissance-diversion elements, sequences of rejection of a fluvial and air landing at the mouths of the Danube, in the Delta and the coastal area of northern Dobrogea, as specified by the General Staff of the Naval Forces. Seven river military ships, ten fast assault boats, a marine infantry company and an infantry platoon from the 9<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Brigade carried out, on the Danube and the Sfântu Gheorghe Arm, training actions for the defence

<sup>14</sup> Marine infantrymen of the 307<sup>th</sup> Regiment carried out, between 19-23 September 2022, the joint multinational exercise “Heracleea 22”, in Mahmudia district, in the Danube Delta. Military river ships (a monitor and a river star), light motor assault craft, Pirahna armoured personnel carriers, armoured reconnaissance amphibious transporters, helicopters, trucks, special vehicles and logistical support equipment participated in the exercise. During the exercise, soldiers from allied states, such as the USA and France, were engaged. Bolocan, V., *Infanteriștii marini români au simulat respingerea unui atac în zona Deltei Dunării*, in “avestrul.ro”, 29 September 2023, <https://adevarul.ro/stiri-interne/evenimente/infanteriștii-marini-romani-au-simulat-respingerea-2209020.html>.



of river communication routes and the infrastructure of the area of the mouths of the Danube in the Black Sea. A sequence of repelling a landing took place in the Mahmudia – Bălteni de Sus fluvial district (Brațul Sfântu Gheorghe) (Diac, 2022).

❖ “Noble Partner 2022” took place at the Vaziani military base in Georgia, from 29 August to 9 September 2022. The exercise aimed to increase training and interoperability between Georgia, the US, regional partners and allied countries, to ensure stability and a secure environment in the Black Sea region. “Romania is represented in this activity by a detachment of 35 participants from the 9<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Brigade “Mărășești”, including a military police platoon and 13 other soldiers integrated into the multinational brigade headquarters”, MoND sources said. The opening ceremony of the exercise was attended by Major General Giorgi Matiashvili, Chief of the Georgian Defence Staff, Brigadier General Roland Dzeladze, Commander of the Eastern Ground Forces Command of Georgia, who is also the leader of the exercise, as well as military attachés of the participating countries. The Romanian brigade was led by Colonel Eugen Popescu<sup>15</sup>. According to representatives of MoND, “Noble Partner 2022” counted about 2,500 participants and was conducted in partnership with Georgia and the United States of America.

❖ At the initiative of the Commander of the 15<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Brigade deployed in the town of Orzysz, between 2-3 August 2022, the Iron Cheetahs Anti-Aircraft Defence Detachment participated together with the other allies of the NATO Battle Group in Poland in a technical presentation in the Klusy range. Starting from April 2023, the “Iron Cheetahs” Air Defence Detachment, generated by the 348<sup>th</sup> Air Defense Battalion “Dobrogea” and coordinated by the Joint Forces Command “General Ioan Emanoil Florescu”<sup>16</sup>, trained jointly, alongside the American, British, Croats and Poles, within the NATO Battle Group in Poland. Their mission was to ensure the consolidated forward presence in the northeastern flank of the Alliance, according to the measures adopted during the Warsaw summit in 2016 (Nohai, Casapu, 2023).

<sup>15</sup> In this event, soldiers from many countries participated, such as Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova, Greece, Great Britain, Turkey, Slovakia, Norway, Lithuania, Azerbaijan, Germany, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Estonia, Poland, Japan, Ukraine and Sweden. Antal, C., *Mai mulți militari români se află în Georgia, pentru exercițiul “Noble Partner 2022”*, in “Ziarul de Investigații”, 2 September 2022, <https://zin.ro/02/09/2022/administratie/noble-partner-2022-georgia/>.

<sup>16</sup> On 1 October 2014, the Operational Command Centre became the Joint Forces Command. On 10 November 2017, the Joint Forces Command received the Battle Flag. In 2021, during the *DACIA 21 exercise*, the command reached Initial Operational Capability (IOC), and in 2022, with the “*HISTRIA 22 exercise*”, Full Operational Capability (FOC). Joint Forces Command, <https://www.defense.ro/comandamente/cfi>.

❖ The multinational exercise “Saber Guardian 23” took place for a week, on several stages. Ended June 9, 2023. Tactics, techniques, and procedures were tested to ensure the cyber protection of mission networks and provide support for protecting critical infrastructure.

❖ The final sequence of the medical evacuation exercise Hospital Exercise 23 took place at 57<sup>th</sup> Air Base Mihail Kogălniceanu. Romania participated in the activity alongside Poland and the United States of America, with specialised personnel from the structures subordinate to the Medical Directorate of the MoND. The huge logistical effort must be appreciated, especially since various types of military equipment from the 14 allied and partner nations participated in the exercises, with 10,000 soldiers, and 1,700 technical means, training intensively in 11 locations<sup>17</sup>.

❖ Between 18.08-02.09.2023, soldiers from the 9<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Brigade “Mărășești” participated in the multinational exercise “Agile Spirit 23”. On 21 August, the opening ceremony of the exercise was held in the Simulation Training Centre of the Georgian Armed Forces at the Krtsanisi training ground. Thus, the soldiers of the 9<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Brigade “Mărășești” actively contributed to fulfilling the motto of the exercise: “Strength Through Partnership!”. The *Agile Spirit 23* exercise was conducted in partnership with Georgia and the United States of America. It sought to increase readiness and interoperability between Georgia, the United States of America, regional partners and allied countries to ensure stability and a secure environment in the Black Sea region. Romania participated in this exercise with a detachment of 55 soldiers from the 9<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Brigade “Mărășești”, led by the commander of the 911<sup>th</sup> Capidava Infantry Battalion<sup>18</sup>, Lieutenant Colonel Irinel Ristea (Ristea, 2023, p. 2).

❖ Between 20-25 September 2023, military convoys of equipment and personnel, belonging to the structures subordinate to the 9<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Brigade “Mărășești”, moved to the Secondary Combat Training Centre in Babadag, on railway and road communication routes, transiting the national territory, to participate in the “MĂRĂȘEȘTI-23” exercise.

<sup>17</sup> “Saber Guardian 23”, un exercițiu multinațional de succes, <http://presamil.ro/saber-guardian-23-un-exercitiu-multinational-de-succes/>

<sup>18</sup> Starting with 2016, the 911<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion “Capidava” took over the combat traditions of the 40<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment “Călugăreni”. The 911 Battalion Day was also celebrated by the detachment participating in the “Mărășești 23” exercise from the Secondary Combat Training Centre in Babadag, through a series of sports activities, in collaboration with the other battalions of the 9<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Brigade.

According to the press release of the 9<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Brigade, “the detachments are to move from the Târgoviște, Medgidia, Murfatlar, Topraisar and Constanța garrisons to the previously specified location. The military police recommend that those who travel on these routes drive with extra care and respect the directions and signals of the police. The “MĂRĂȘEȘTI-23” exercise is part of the brigade’s major training activities and is planned from 2022” (Georgescu, 2023).

## OSCE – TRUST AND SECURITY IN EUROPE

On 13 September 2023, 58 representatives of the member states of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) paid a visit to the 9<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Brigade “Mărășești”, as part of an activity of mutual transparency, organised according to the provisions of the Document of in Vienna 2011 on measures to increase confidence and security in Europe. As part of this activity, a static exhibition of equipment and equipment from the Land Forces was organised at the brigade headquarters, as well as a demonstration tactical exercise, and in the automated range from Topraisar, the 341<sup>st</sup> Infantry Battalion “Constanța” organised a tactical exercise in the field, company level, and another exhibition of techniques and equipment from the Land Forces (Băltărețu, 2023). The new thematic exhibition was visited and appreciated: *The military history of Dobrogea from the earliest times to the 9<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Brigade “Mărășești”*.

The Russian invasion was condemned on numerous occasions within the OSCE, this being considered a unique situation, unprecedented in the organisation’s history, as a result of the lack of coercive measures for the Russian Federation. Since before the outbreak of the armed conflict, Ukraine has been an important area of interest for the OSCE, especially after 2014, following the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation and the establishment of the separatist regime (strongly supported by Russia) in eastern Ukraine<sup>19</sup>.

A drone attack took place on the night of 25 to 26 September 2023 on the Ukrainian bank of the Danube, in the area of Orlovka and some pieces fell near a ferry with Romanians leaving for Isaccea. The Coast Guard announced the closure of traffic through the Isaccea border crossing point. In the context of increasingly frequent Russian attacks on the Ukrainian bank of the Danube, in the second part

<sup>19</sup> When the Russian invasion of Ukraine began, on 24 February 2022, the mission still had approximately 500 monitors on the ground, who continued their work during the evacuation of the Ukrainian civilian population from the war-affected areas. Thus, starting from the second half of March 2022, the OSCE mission on Ukrainian territory was suspended.

of September 2023, the Ministry of National Defence discussed with the authorities in Brăila, Constanța, Galati and Tulcea the importance of correct coordination in a crisis situation, under the provisions of Government Decision no. 969/2007 “regarding the organisation, development and management of training for the defence of persons with management duties in the field of public administration, at central and local level, being, at the same time, a continuation of the dialogue supported by the leadership of MoND with the representatives of local public authorities”<sup>20</sup>.

## INSTEAD OF CONCLUSIONS

An active role of Romania within NATO is crucial for promoting national interests at the inter-allied level and integrating Romania’s security concerns into the North Atlantic Alliance’s decision-making process. On 1 November 2023, the Mechanised Brigade “Mărășești” celebrated 145 years of existence with a military and religious ceremony at the Monument to the Heroes of the War of Independence. The event took place at the plateau in front of the House of Culture in the Constanța garrison<sup>21</sup>. It is also a time to reflect on past achievements and set new goals in the service of the Motherland.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY:

1. Antal, C. (2022). *Mai mulți militari români se află în Georgia, pentru exercițiul “Noble Partner 2022”*, in “Ziarul de Investigații”, <https://zin.ro/02/09/2022/administratie/noble-partner-2022-georgia/>, retrieved on 22 August 2023.
2. Avram, C. (2022). *Ceremonial de repatriere la Brigada 9 “Mărășești”*, in “Observator de Constanța”, <https://observatorconstanta.ro/2022/05/05/ceremonial-de-repatriere-la-brigada-9-marasesti/>, retrieved on 12 August 2023.
3. Băhnăreanu, C. (2005). *Puterea militară în secolul XXI: modalități de realizare și manifestare a puterii militare în societatea democratică românească*. București: Editura Universității Naționale de Apărare.
4. Băltărețu, C. (2023). *Demonstrări tactice și expoziții de tehnică militară în timpul vizitei OSCE la Brigada 9 Mecanizată “Mărășești”*, in “Ziua de Constanța”, <https://www.ziuaconstanta.ro/stiri/actualitate/stiri-constanta-demonstrari-tactice-si-expozitii-de-tehnica-militara-in-timpul-vizitei-osce-la-brigada-9-mecanizata-marasesti-828147.html>, retrieved on 12 August 2023.

<sup>20</sup> *Armata a bagat în ședință autoritățile din Dobrogea, după atacurile cu drone rusești de la graniță*, in “Digi 24”, 27 September 2023, <https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/actualitate/armata-a-bagat-in-sedinta-autoritatile-din-dobrogea-dupa-atacurile-cu-drone-rusesti-de-la-granita-2520179>.

<sup>21</sup> “Drill Team” exercises, historical reenactments, the Survival Range and the new permanent exhibition of Dobrogean military history from the earliest times to the 9<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Brigade “Mărășești” were presented to the public, at the headquarters of the “King Ferdinand I” National Military Museum. Constanța branch, inaugurated in September 2023.

5. Bolocan, V. *Infanteriștii marini români au simulat respingerea unui atac în zona Deltei Dunării*, in "adevarul.ro", <https://adevarul.ro/stiri-interne/evenimente/infanteriștii-marini-romani-au-simulat-respingerea-2209020.html>, retrieved on 12 August 2023.
6. *Ceremonialul de repatriere a Detașamentului "GHEPARZII DE FIER"*, in "România Internațional", 3 May 2022, [https://www.rri.ro/ro\\_ro/ceremonialul\\_de\\_repatriere\\_a\\_detasamentului\\_gheparzii\\_de\\_fier-2660318](https://www.rri.ro/ro_ro/ceremonialul_de_repatriere_a_detasamentului_gheparzii_de_fier-2660318), retrieved on 22 August 2023.
7. Diac, M. (2022). *Armata Română se antrenează pentru a respinge o debarcare în Dobrogea*, in "România Liberă", <https://romanioliberal.ro/investigatii-romania-libera/incognito/armata-romana-se-antreneaza-pentru-a-respinge-o-debarcare-in-delta-dunarii/>, retrieved on 12 August 2023.
8. Duțu, P. (2012). *Misiunile strategice ale armatei României în cadrul alianței nordatlantice*. București: Editura Universității Naționale de Apărare "Carol I", p. 48.
9. Gavrilaș, C. (2022). *Trupe NATO, la marginea Deltei Dunării. "Mărășești - 22.2" va trage cu muniție reală*, in Adevarul.ro, <https://adevarul.ro/stiri-locale/tulcea/trupe-nato-la-marginea-deltei-dunarii-marasessti-2209082.html>, retrieved on 12 August 2023.
10. Georgescu, A. (2023). *Convoaie militare de tehnică și personal de la Brigada 9 Mecanizată se vor deplasa la Babadag*, in "CT News".
11. Lupu, M. (2022). *Prin Babadag nu se trece*, in "presamil.ro", November 2022, <http://presamil.ro/prin-babadag-nu-se-trece/>, retrieved on 12 August 2023.
12. Martinescu, D. (2010). *Armata Dobrogei, reactivată după șase ani de repaus*, in "România Liberă", <https://archive.ph/20130615184430/http://www.romanioliberal.ro/actualitate/locale/armata-dobrogei-reactivata-dupa-sase-ani-de-repaus-186071.html#selection-851.1-851.52>, retrieved on 12 August 2023.
13. Mândiță, M. (2022). *Exercițiul militar Justice Eagle 22.1*, in "Radio România Actualități", <https://www.romania-actualitati.ro/stiri/romania/exercitiul-militar-justice-eagle-22-1-id162766.html>, retrieved on 12 August 2023.
14. Lt.-col. McEwen, K. (2022). *Divizia 101 Aeropurtată sosește în Europa pentru a sprijini aliații NATO*, in "US Army", [https://www.army.mil/article/258008/101st\\_airborne\\_division\\_arrives\\_in\\_europe\\_to\\_support\\_nato\\_allies](https://www.army.mil/article/258008/101st_airborne_division_arrives_in_europe_to_support_nato_allies), retrieved on 22 August 2023.
15. Nohai, G., Casapu, G. (2023). *Prezentare de tehnică militară în Polonia*, in "În slujba patriei", nr. 11 (232), p. 3, <https://www.armata-buzau.ro/images/inslujbapatriei/Ziar8-2023.pdf> retrieved on 23 August 2023.
16. Orzeață, M. (2004). *Securitatea și continua transformare în secolul XXI. Eseuri*. București: Editura Militară, pp. 37-39.
17. Pascu, E. (2020). *Brigada 9 Mecanizată Mărășești continuă instrucția*, in "Defense Romania", [https://www.defenseromania.ro/brigada-9-mecanizata-mara-e-ti-continua-instruc-ia\\_603279.html](https://www.defenseromania.ro/brigada-9-mecanizata-mara-e-ti-continua-instruc-ia_603279.html), retrieved on 13 August 2023.
18. Pavel, L. (2004). *"Viking 2003" și transmisioniștii Companiei SEEBRIG*, in *Observatorul militar*, nr. 1, 7-13 January 2004, <http://www.presamil.ro/OM/2004/01/pag%2021.htm>, retrieved on 12 August 2023.
19. Ristea, I. (2023). *Exercițiul "Agile Spirit 23"*, in "În slujba patriei", nr. 11 (232), p. 2, <https://www.armata-buzau.ro/images/inslujbapatriei/Ziar8-2023.pdf>, retrieved on 22 August 2023.
20. Tchernoff-Horovitz, M. (2022). *Ucraina și Rusia, iubire și ură*. București: Editura Neverland.
21. Vieru, I. (2022). *Exercițiul NATO în județul Galați. Sute de militari americani și români au participat*, in "Playtech. Știri", <https://playtech.ro/stiri/exercitiu-nato-in-judetul-galati-sute-de-militari-americani-si-romani-au-participat-484809>, retrieved on 13 August 2023.
22. <https://arhiepiscopiatomisului.ro/2022/01/31/capela-batalionului-logistic-pontul-euxin-constanta/>, retrieved on 12 August 2023.
23. [https://armed.mapn.ro/despre\\_noi.php](https://armed.mapn.ro/despre_noi.php), retrieved on 17 August 2023.
24. <https://playtech.ro/stiri/exercitiu-nato-in-judetul-galati-sute-de-militari-americani-si-romani-au-participat-484809>, retrieved on 12 August 2023.
25. <http://presamil.ro/saber-guardian-23-un-exercitiu-multinational-de-succes/>, retrieved on 12 August 2023.
26. <https://www.clubulamiralilor.ro/general-de-brigada-r-dr-vasile-hermeneanu/>, retrieved on 22 August 2023.
27. <https://www.telegrafonline.ro/brigada-9-mecanizata-marasessti-isi-dezvaluie-secretele-despre-ce-este-vorba>, retrieved on 12 August 2023.