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110 Izvor St., Bucharest, Romania

tel/fax +4021-3195698

e-mail: drp@mapn.ro

www.mapn.gov.ro

**The Minister of National Defence Gabriel Oprea
Decorated Major General (R) Dumitru Dorin Prunariu
with Crest "Onoarea Armatei României"**

Special points of interests:

- **The Minister of National Defence Gabriel Oprea Decorated Major General (R) Dumitru Dorin Prunariu with Crest "Onoarea Armatei României"**
- **The Command and Control Element Zabul and the 2nd "Călugăreni" Infantry Battalion To Be Deployed to Afghanistan**
- **Minister Gabriel Oprea awards the Crest "Onoarea Armatei României" to Soldiers Wounded in Afghanistan**



The Minister of National Defence Gabriel Oprea decorates Major General (R) Dumitru Dorin Prunariu with the Crest "Onoarea Armatei României"

The Minister of National Defence Gabriel Oprea decorated Major General (R) Dumitru Dorin Prunariu with the Crest "Onoarea Armatei României", as a token of appreciation for his activity and special merits that played an important role in improving the image of the Romanian Armed Forces. The event organized on this occasion took place at the defence ministry HQ, on Thursday, May 19.

Minister Oprea emphasized in his speech at the ceremony that the Dumitru Prunariu's spaceflight 30 years ago was of utmost importance for the prestige of the Romanian people among the world's nations.

Recalling the first Romanian astronaut's spaceflight the defence minister said: "Nobody could ever forget the historical night of 30 years ago, when the then 1st Lieutenant, engineer Dumitru Prunariu, onboard spacecraft Soyuz-40, was launched into space from Baikonur cosmodrome, taking the Romanian Flag in outer space, a flag he was carrying in his heart and on his costume. I was 20 then, still in military school in Sibiu and I remember, like it was yesterday, the pride I felt for the young Romanian officer that put the name of Romania on the map of the elite nations that were able to send an astronaut in space. I believe all Romanians felt the same and we were all by your side, holding our breaths, dear General Prunariu, until you came back safe home."

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Mr. Gabriel Oprea continued saying: This outstanding achievement of the Romanian scientific community is imprinted in gold letters in our history. You were awarded the Crest "Onoarea Armatei României", the highest military award for the honor and prestige your achievement brought to the Army you are part of, General."

Major General (R) Dumitru Prunariu in his turn said: "I will always cherish the military uniform, even now as a retired General, because I owe so much to the military institution as it helped me train to become an astronaut and for its continued support and I will always be the same devoted officer to my country, Romania. I continue to be involvd in different activities so I have the opportunity to see how things are done and I speak to many retired officers who are now quite satisfied



The Ceremony organized for the decoration of Major General (R) Dumitru Dorin Prunariu with the Crest "Onoarea Armatei României" by minister Oprea

with their increased pensions. That is why I came to the conclusion that minister Oprea`s efforts really pay as he can understand military life, respects it, sustains it and is permanently trying to improve the life conditions of the military men, both active or retired. Mister Minister Oprea made me a great surprise today".

Speaking of his spaceflight of 30 years ago, the astronaut said:"It was quite a special event that elevated Romania at a high level of space research and I am glad that the program continued after 1990 when I worked directly with some of my colleagues in drafting the Government Decision for the establishment of the Romanian Space Agency as government agency. Constant progress has been made since and we came to sign government agreements with the European Space Agency, with NASA, with the French Space Agency and others around the world. This year we have become full pledged members of the European Space Agency as a recognition of our scientific, technological and managerial capabilities."

Major General (R) Dumitru Prunariu emphasized his pride of being a member of the Romanian Armed Forces: "Over time, in all positions I held, whether military or civilian, I have always proudly represented the military institution, be it the chairmanship of the Romanian Space Agency, as Romanian ambassador in the Russian Federation, or the latest, as Chairman of the UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, elected by 70 of world`s nations."

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Dumitru Dorin Prunariu, the 103rd Earth inhabitant to reach Outer Space, a Romanian military officer from 1978 to 2007, had completed his training for a spaceflight in the Star City near Moscow, Russia. After three years of training he got top grades in the final exams, being assigned to be part of the crew with Russian cosmonaut Leonid Popov.

From May 14 to 22, 1981, the two astronauts on board of space shuttle Soyuz-40 and space lab Salint-6 travelled in space for seven days, 20 hors and 42 minutes. During the flight, several scientific and astrophysics experiments had been carried out such as studies of cosmic radiation, space technologies, medicine, biology and psychology, experiments designed mostly by Romanian specialists.

Major General (R) Dumitru Dorin Prunariu contributed to the prestige of the Romanian Armed Forces and Romania, at present holding several positions as chairman of the Romanian Space Agency, a member of the Astronautics Committee of the Romanian Academy, a member of the Academy of Romanian Scientists, Founding Member of the Association of Outer Space Explorers, a member of the International Astronautics Academy, Chairman of the UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

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The Command and Control Element Zabul and the 2nd "Călugăreni" Infantry Battalion To Be Deployed to Afghanistan



The Minister of National Defence Gabriel Oprea congratulating the soldiers of the 2nd Calugareni Infantry Battalion

The Minister of National Defence, Mr. Gabriel Oprea, participated in the ceremony organized on Thursday, May 19, for the deployment of the Command and Control Element Zabul and the 2nd "Calugareni" Infantry Battalion to Afghanistan.

In the speech he delivered on this occasion, the Minister of National Defence Gabriel Oprea said: "I am convinced we will be represented by the troops of the 2nd "Calugareni" Infantry Battalion and the Combined Team Zabul, both part of the 1st „Argedava" Mechanized Brigade, with honor and integrity in the mission of high responsibility they conduct so far away from their country". The defence minister values the expertise the troops from Bucharest got over time as "veterans of international missions conducted across three continents", their constant efforts in training in the firing ranges, in national and multinational exercises, in order to thoroughly prepare for this new mission.

The ceremony took place at the Land Forces Staff HQ in Bucharest.

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Minister Gabriel Oprea awards the Crest "Onoarea Armatei României" to Soldiers Wounded in Afghanistan



The Minister of National Defence Gabriel Oprea awarding the Crest "Onoarea Armatei României", with war insignia, to 1st Lieutenant George Olteanu

On Wednesday, May 18, the Minister of National Defence, Mr. Gabriel Oprea awarded 1st Lieutenant George Olteanu, Sergeant Majors Marius Apostol and Daniel Riza and Corporal Nicolae Barbu the Crest "Onoarea Armatei României", as a token of appreciation for their competence, courage, sacrifice, devotion and initiative in fulfilling the combat missions assigned to them in the theater of operations in Afghanistan.

Minister Gabriel Oprea and the chief of General Staff, Major General Ptefan Danila visited 1st Lieutenant George Olteanu and Sergeant Major Daniel Riza who are currently hospitalized at the

Central Military Hospital "Dr. Carol Davila". The Minister of Defence handed the two soldiers their awards personally. Sergeant Major Apostol is going to get his in Germany, where he presently is for medical treatment while Corporal will receive his award in Afghanistan.

The leadership of the Ministry of National Defence is permanently updated on the condition of the two patients and the progress of their recovery programs.

The defence minister encouraged the two soldiers and assured them of the support they have both from him and the military leadership, for the duration of their hospitalization and onward.

Sergeant Major Apostol Marius, previously hospitalized in Landstuhl (Germany), returned home on May 22, only to undergo a recovery program at the *Dr. Carol Davila* Military Hospital. His condition shows a constant good evolution.

Corporal Nicolae Barbu resumed his activity already on May 1, at Lagman Base in Afghanistan.

On May 1, the four soldiers of the 26th "Neagoe Basarab" Infantry Battalion were conducting a mission on A1 autoroute in Zabul Province, Afghanistan, onboard of a MRAP (Mine Resistant Ambush Protected) vehicle that was attacked with an improvised explosive device.