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ROMANIAN MILITARY NEWSLETTER

**Military ceremony to mark the deployment of the 280th Mechanized
Infantry Battalion to Afghanistan**

Special points of interests:

- Military ceremony to mark the deployment of the 280th Mechanized Infantry Battalion to Afghanistan
- Combined Team Zabul and the 2nd „Calugareni“ Infantry Battalion return from Afghanistan
- The 15th „Podu Înalt“ Mechanized Brigade – 135 Years of Existence
- Soldiers and contract enlisted volunteers – the retirement age increases from 45 to 50



Minister Gabriel Oprea salutes
militaries of 280 Mechanized Infantry Battalion

The Minister of National Defence Gabriel Oprea participated on Friday, January 13th, in the military ceremony that marked the deployment to Afghanistan of 600 militaries of the 280th Mechanized Infantry Battalion from Focsani.

„You will be proud to go there knowing that you are coming from an elite institution that both Romanians and the foreigners trust (...). Thanks to you the national colors are respected in the theaters of operations and the Romanian military has become a symbol of the professionalism. As simple citizen and as Minister of National Defence, I am proud of each time the important leaders of the world praise your professionalism, courage and devotion“, stated Minister Gabriel Oprea.

In his speech, the minister outlined the excellent results scored in battle and the professionalism of the militaries of 280th Mechanized Infantry Battalion, „qualities that have been proved in the numerous



Minister Gabriel Oprea together with the
militaries leaving for Afghanistan

missions accomplished both at home and in the theaters of operations from Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan as well as part of NATO Response Force“.

At the same time he made it clear to the militaries that their presence in the theater of operations, together with the other structures of the army, stands for the Romanian steady response to NATO's request in increasing our participation to ensure security and stability in Afghanistan.

Minister Oprea urged the militaries to make the most of their fighter abilities, to act according to their mandate, prove responsible and professional and have a correct co-operation relationship and a good coordination with Romania's partners and allies.

„The team I am ahead of in the Ministry of National Defence will make everything possible so that your mission (of the ones that left for Afghanistan) be carried out in the best conditions“, emphasized Minister Oprea, expressing his conviction that the militaries will rise to their forerunners' exploits and to the standards they set together with their colleagues from the Romanian Armed Forces.

„I am convinced that you will honor the national colors and military oath with devotion and courage throughout the mission, and I can assure you of the Romanian people's gratitude. Our main goal is to have everybody that today says goodbye and deploys to the theater of operations back safe to their beloved and permanently feel the Romanian Armed Force's fellowship. I've said many times that the Romanian Armed Force is a big family, and these moments reflect at their best your devotion and involvement that were critical for the accomplishment of our assigned missions“, concluded Gabriel Oprea, by addressing the militaries and their families attending the ceremony.



Combined Team Zabul and the 2nd "Calugareni" Infantry Battalion return from Afghanistan



The Minister of National Defence Gabriel Oprea salutes the Colours of the 2nd "Calugareni" Infantry Battalion

The Minister of National Defence Gabriel Oprea participated on January 11th, in the ceremony that marked the return from Afghanistan of Combined Zabul Team - manned with militaries from 1st „Argedava“ Mechanized Brigade - and the 2nd „Calugareni“ Infantry Battalion, and thanked the militaries for their excellent accomplishment of the mission. «“You have reported mission accomplished!“ and I congratulate you for the outstanding manner you performed in the Afghan theater of operations. I am proud of you and right to say that today we are welcoming the real patriots and professionals, the best ambassadors of the Romanian image worldwide», stated Minister Oprea.

„The 460,000 kilometers covered in the six months of mission speak about the amplitude of the operations conducted in the Romanian forces’ area of responsibility“, declared Minister Oprea. Also, Minister Oprea pointed out the co-operation with the American counterparts with respect to the command and control of the military operations which contributed to the enhanced capability of the Romanian militaries in maintaining a steady security climate „confirmed not only by our partners, but also by the Afghan people“.

Minister Oprea also reminded the support offered by the „military allies“ and the measures taken by the Ministry of National Defence to increase the militaries’ safety and their equipping with MRAP-type vehicles used by the American militaries.

He appreciated the mission accomplished and the efforts made by the commander of the 2nd „Calugareni“ Infantry Battalion, Iulian Berdila, who was promoted to colonel for exceptional results.

In his turn, colonel Marius Harabagiu, the commander of 1st „Argedava“ Mechanized Brigade, stated that 43 missions, 4 air assaults and 6,900 routine missions had been accomplished by his subordinate forces throughout the six months of mission, thus succeeding in capturing over 2,500 kilograms of improvised explosive device. „The 580 CIMIC missions and 63 missions accomplished by female engagement teams (FET) were conducted to offer assistance to the local population in 180 villages. 154 population support projects were finalized. The results of these missions materialized in ensuring the freedom of movement on A1 Highway not only for the NATO forces but also for the Afghan population and by proving the professionalism, skills and rapidly-deploying character of the Romanian Armed Force“, stated colonel Harabagiu.



The 15th "Podu Înalț" Mechanized Brigade – 135 Years of Existence



Minister Gabriel Oprea addressing the audience

The Minister of National Defence Gabriel Oprea participated in the ceremony organized in Iasi, on Friday, January 6, to celebrate 135 years since the 15th „Podu Înalț“ Mechanized Brigade was established.

„This large unit continues the tradition of a legendary unit of the Romanian Army, the 15th Foot Soldiers Regiment that gloriously participated in all significant battles and wars of the Romanian nation since the Independence War“, the defence minister pointed out in his speech.

Speaking of the missions accomplished at home, Minister Gabriel Oprea thanked the soldiers from Iasi for the way they acted in all humanitarian missions they were involved in, for their moral strength and humanity: „Your activity is well-known due to the interventions during the floods in Moldavia, in the past years. The brave deeds for saving people and assisting them gave Romanian people the hope and trust that the military will always be there for them, readily lending a hand in solving difficult situations“.

The 15th „Podu Înalț“ Mechanized Brigade is the unit continuing the combat traditions of the 15th Foot Soldiers Regiment that was established on January 1st, 1877 based on Decree No. 2195 of November 26, 1876. As of 1996, the brigade participated in peacekeeping missions in Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, in theaters of operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Soldiers and contract enlisted volunteers – the retirement age increases from 45 to 50

The President of Romania, Traian Basescu, promulgated on Monday, January 16, the Law for the amendment and completion of Law 384/2006 on the statute of soldiers and contract enlisted volunteers.

The amendments adopted by the Senate to Law 384/2006 on the statute of soldiers and contract enlisted volunteers derive from the legislative initiative forwarded by Minister of National Defence Gabriel Oprea to the Chamber of Deputies in November 2010, in his position as deputy.

Along the entire legislative processes at the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies, the Ministry of National Defence advocated the need to adopt the completions and amendments to the statute of soldiers and contract enlisted volunteers urgently, in order to increase the interest for the military career and to motivate military men to participate in missions abroad and to bring their statute closer to that of active duty military personnel.

The law stipulates that „soldiers and enlisted professionals“ will be used instead of „soldiers and contract enlisted volunteers“. In their case, the retirement age increases from 45 to 50. As provided by law, soldiers and enlisted professionals will have housing facilities ensured for the duration of their service, rent free.

The amendments stipulate that soldiers and enlisted professionals with outstanding performance in accomplishing their duties, in training, in participating in missions abroad or activities at home can be exceptionally promoted in rank, to private first class or corporal, with no other eligibility criteria needed.