

**José Alberto Azeredo Lopes**

Ministro da Defesa Nacional

**Speech by H. E. the Minister of National Defence of Portugal, on the occasion of the  
handover of the first 6 F16s to Romania**

Bucharest, 07 October 2016

Your Excellency, **Prime-Minister Çiolos,**

Your Excellency, Minister of National Defence of Romania, **Ambassador Motoc (Dear Friend, Minhea),**

Your Excellency, **Chief of the General Staff of the Romanian Armed Forces,**

Your Excellences, **Chiefs of the General Staff of the Romanian and Portuguese Air Force,**

Dear Ambassadors,

Dear High Military Officers and Civilian Authorities,

Distinguished Guests,

[...]

This is a historic day not only for Portugal and Romania, but also for European common defence and security. We are here to celebrate the strengthening of bilateral relations in the field of Defence between Portugal and Romania and to honour the successful cooperation between three Allied countries – Romania, the United States of America and Portugal. Together, we have built a capacity that constitutes a major contribution to our security's indivisibility.

Just less than 10 days ago, these F16s were in Monte Real, in Portugal, where my Prime-Minister, Minister Motoc, and myself had the opportunity to bid them “farewell”. And it is truly spectacular to find them again here today, already flying in their “new home”, the Romanian skies.

This would not have been possible without the commitment, professionalism and dedication of all those involved in the project from the beginning and which will continue to lead it, until the second set of aircrafts is delivered. To the men and women, civilian and military, of our respective air forces: to our pilots, our engineers, to our mechanics, to our translators and to their families, I say, on behalf of the Portuguese government, a big and warm-hearted “THANK YOU!”

You are well the proof that the unity of the transatlantic space and of Europe is alive and that we take seriously our common responsibility to ensure peace throughout the continent, from the Atlantic Ocean to the Black Sea, both in the context of NATO and in the context of the EU. With this contribution to the technical, operational, training and logistical capabilities of Romania, we have furthered our vision of security, directed at the four quadrants of the compass, in a 360 degrees rotation.

Let me briefly highlight that cooperation in defence matters between Portugal and Romania extends beyond “air”, to include “land”, “sea” and, “last but not least”, the cyberspace. That is why, in addition to continuing the program of the F16s, our Bilateral Cooperation Plan for 2016/17 covers other areas of mutual interest, aimed at responding to new challenges, risks and threats: cyber defence, unmanned aircraft, chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons, with special emphasis on training in these areas.

We must now build on the *lessons learned* with the F16s to continue to generate synergies for other common projects, which can better equip us to deal with the threats emerging from the complex security environment we live in. The “arc of instability” around Europe is a fact, from Tunisia to Ukraine, including plagues such as terrorism striking at the heart of our societies.

That is why these turbulent times rendered the new *European Union Global Strategy* a “necessity”, in complementarity to NATO’s role in defence matters. Thus, I am convinced that, within the realm of the new *European Defence Action Plan*, there will be room for Portugal and Romania to come together again and to contribute to foster the security of our common European home.

Once again, Prime-Minister, dear Minhea, thank you for your warm welcome to Romania. And as we celebrate the handover of these impressive “technological birds”, the “fighter falcons”, F16s, I now end by wishing us all: *Clear Skies and Happy Landings*.

*Vă mulțumim!*