

**ISSUES RELATED TO THE OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS AND REGULATIONS OF THE  
ROMANIAN MILITARY ATTACHÉS DURING THE PERIOD 1925-1943**

<b>Abstract:</b>	<p><i>The military issue has always been a concern in the foreign policy of the states, and the continuous progress made in the various military fields, as well as the increasingly significant tendency of military diplomacy to be involved in the maintenance of international peace and security, led to the need to use military experts within diplomatic missions, from specialists in the field to permanent advisers to the heads of permanent or temporary diplomatic missions.</i></p> <p><i>The history of military attachés dates to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century when European countries began sending military observers to foreign capitals to monitor military developments and gather intelligence about the accredited state.</i></p> <p><i>Military attachés are members of the army of the accrediting state and head the military offices of the respective diplomatic missions, being, in principle, hierarchically subordinate, regardless of rank, to the head of the diplomatic mission. However, this subordination does not prevent the military from communicating directly with the ministries regarding strict military issues, especially those that refer to military secrets.</i></p> <p><i>The period after the First World War, along with the development of Romanian diplomacy, was recorded as the strengthening of the institution of the military attachment, having a special contribution to the implementation of the country's military policy.</i></p>
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A military attaché is a military officer who is assigned to a diplomatic mission (embassy or consulate) in a foreign country and works closely with the diplomatic staff at the embassy or consulate to ensure a coordinated approach to foreign policy and national security objectives. The main responsibilities of a military attaché include gathering intelligence on the host country's military capabilities, maintaining contacts with local military and government officials, facilitating military training and exchange programs, and promoting friendly relations between the two militaries. Military attachés are usually high-ranking military officers, often with significant experience in the field of military intelligence and diplomacy.

The period after the First World War, along with the development of Romanian diplomacy, was recorded as the strengthening of the institution of the military attachment, having a special contribution to the implementation of the country's military policy.

In 1925 the "Instructions related to the situation and relations of military attachés to the staff of the legations"<sup>897</sup> were elaborated. The document stated that the military attaché had the status of military adviser of the legation and had the rank of adviser, also emphasizing the professional relations between the military attachés and the other advisers and secretaries of the legation. Thus, "the adviser of the legation had precedence over the military attaché when he was not a general in military rank. The military attaché had

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<sup>897</sup>Romanian Military Archives, Pitești, *Instructions related to the situation and relations of military attachés to the staff of the legations*, Fund Studies and searches, Folder No. crt. 20, f. 236

precedence over secretaries of legation of any rank and other members of the legation. When the councilor performed the function of charge of affairs, he had precedence over the military attaché, whatever his rank was"<sup>898</sup>. As an adviser, the military attaché was supposed to collaborate with the head of mission on political and military matters, for mutual communication of opinions, and for sharing the experience of the military attaché in military matters.

Regarding the correspondence of the military attachés, it was sent sealed to the Ministry of War, respectively M.St.M. of the Romanian Army, through the legation and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the novelty being the fact that the envelopes with correspondence could not be opened by anyone.

The previous instructions provided that the correspondence containing military aspects, although delivered to the legation closed, could be opened by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, an aspect that contravened the principle of keeping the transmitted aspects secret.

According to the "Directive for Military Attachés"<sup>899</sup> of 1927, they had the mission of informing the M.St.M. of the Romanian Army on everything that referred to the factors of military power of the countries in which they were accredited, along with the political situation of the country, especially in the fields related to its military capacity. Other missions of the military attachés were: "obtaining information about the political relations of the states, in which they were accredited, with the neighboring states, especially the relations related to military operations; concluding the war plan, forms of concentration, directions of attack, etc.; follow-up of matters concerning the Romanian Army, appeared in the press and foreign publications; combating, with the approval of M.St.M. of the Romanian Army, the enemy's tendencies to discredit Romania in the world"<sup>900</sup>. These duties did not allow the military attaché to obtain information through unauthorized means, which was not "excusable"<sup>901</sup>.

Considering these clarifications, the Directive guided the military attachés on how and where they had to obtain information, stating that the military attaché had to inform himself of the military authorities of the state in which he was located<sup>902</sup> and carry out a series of personal investigations on some military objectives of high importance. Also, the Directives referred to the fact that the information obtained would refer not only to the country where the officer was accredited but also to other countries on which information could be obtained, from the military or political bodies of the country of residence. It was emphasized that, in this sense, M.St.M. of an allied country had every interest in providing Romania with information on the common enemy; also, the military attaché could get some valuable news from a colleague, in exchange for some news about another country that he would request from the M.St.M. of the Romanian Army. What a military attaché from the country in which he was accredited could not find out, another Romanian military attaché from another country could find out. What could not be found out in Poland about the poles, could be found out from the Romanian military attaché in France or another country. In other words, the Romanian military attachés, in the persistent pursuit of a matter, had to be in close contact with each other, communicating the necessary data. Information about Romania could only be provided with the prior approval of M.St.M. of the Romanian Army, apart from the non-secret ones. Using all these means, the military attaché could document himself very well on all the matters he needed, without having to make use of any unauthorized means, which could only compromise him.

In conclusion, the military attaché had to have the ability to obtain information as useful as possible to the decision-makers in our country, an activity that required a continuous and assiduous concern in this direction. He also had to have a special tact to use all the possible means allowed.

The same directives exemplify extremely clearly how information can be obtained from one country to another. For example, "in Poland you could get very good information about Russia, because this country was our common enemy, because Poland had diplomatic relations and a military attaché in Russia, because the poles knew the Russian language and customs, better than the Romanian representatives, having a large

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<sup>898</sup> *Idem*

<sup>899</sup> *Ibidem*, ff. 237-243

<sup>900</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 238

<sup>901</sup> The military attaché continued to be the representative of M.S. To the king in addition to the government where he was accredited so that he cannot spy in any form.

<sup>902</sup> From the officers of the army of that state, with whom he was to be on the best possible terms; attending as many military exercises as possible; from the military attachés of allied and neutral countries with whom he also had to maintain very good relations; from the study of the official monitor, military newspapers, and magazines.

population that was under Russian rule, had more facilities than Romania to create an information service in Russia, something that could also be said about Germany; in Serbia could be obtained information about Hungary and Bulgaria, common enemies, as well as on other states such as Germany, Italy, Turkey, etc.; in Italy it was possible to obtain information about Serbia, Hungary and Austria, with the last two countries Italy had trade links and was thus very well informed; in France and England information could be obtained about Russia; also France could give us information about Germany and Hungary where it exercised a right of control; in Germany, Bulgaria and Hungary, the military attaché could obtain information within the control commissions with which they had to maintain close ties; with the help of the Greek, Bulgarian and Serbian military attachés information could be obtained about Turkey”<sup>903</sup>.

As for the nature of the information to be sought by the military attachés, it depended on the nature of the relations between our state and the countries in which they were operating. So that, in the countries that were regarded as probable enemies of Romania, the information had to cover as wide as possible and tend to precise conclusions on armaments, means of combat, military laws and regulations, the character and personality of the commanders of large units and chiefs of general staff, as well as any other matters that could influence their military power and more.

In strong countries, with developed military training, but without direct links with Romania, the attachés had to obtain information regarding the scientific progress registered by the respective armies, the provisions of military regulations, training methods, the organization of the command, the general staffs, the services, and the military schools. In the allied countries, studies and information had to clarify, to what extent their military power would allow them to fulfill their obligations and how they understood to collaborate with Romania. By all means, the military attachés had to maintain a close connection with the M.St.Mt of the allied powers and the Little Entente and participate in military applications in the allied states, when it refers to the Romanian front. In the situation where the military attachés were unable to take part in the respective military applications, they had to obtain information related to their deployment from the competent officers of the other major states. Considering the rather tense international context, they had to look for information about the intentions of the respective major states, in the event of a general war.

In conclusion, the military attaché had to always think, about how he could be more useful, from all points of view, for the war preparation of the Romanian army.

In 1938, there was drawn up a new ”Regulation for Romanian military, aeronautical, and naval attachés”<sup>904</sup>, valid until 1946. According to the document, the military attaché was part of Romania's diplomatic mission, with the role of military-technical advisor of the head of mission. Being a member of the diplomatic corps, he enjoyed all the prerogatives generally recognized for members of this corps. The main role of the military attaché was to inform M.St.M. of the Romanian Army (on which he directly depended) about military issues or events and to obtain useful information for him, he was obliged to use only correct and compatible means, both as member of the Diplomatic Corps and as an officer loyal to the country that gave him the concession. The 1938 regulation gave the military attaché important representational powers so that he represented the Romanian authority and the interests of the Romanian Army in all circumstances before the authorities of the country where he was accredited, the diplomatic corps, and Romanian citizens, regardless of their status in the country of accreditation. The military-maintained protocol relations, but also private relations with foreign diplomats, especially with the other military attachés, whom he was going to use to propagate a pleasant image for his country and his army, but also to be able to inform himself about the issues that interested.

Depending on the importance of that country in military relations with Romania, the military attaché was seconded by an aide and by an aeronautical and naval military attaché. The regulation made a distinction between the three categories: the military attaché was de jure and de facto the representative of the Army, while the aeronautical and naval attachés were specialists destined to serve the aeronautics and the navy. The latter were also part of the diplomatic mission, being technical advisors for aviation, respectively marine, of the head of the legation. Between them, there were relations of collaboration and not of subordination. The Regulation also provided that, ”when the military attaché was absent from his post for various reasons (leave,

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<sup>903</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 240

<sup>904</sup> Romanian Military Archives, Pitești, *Regulation for Romanian military, aeronautical and naval attachés*, Fund Studies and searches, Folder No. crt. 311, ff. 19-21

duty visits, etc.), the aeronautical or naval attaché, if he resided in the same capital, replaced him, in order of seniority, specifying that this only happened where the military attaché was missing help<sup>905</sup>.

Regarding the duties of aeronautical and naval attachés, they were like those of military attachés; they reported information, and participated in maneuvers, military conferences, celebrations, etc. Military attachés (aeronautical and naval) were recruited only from among staff officers, who distinguished themselves during their careers, preferring officers who worked in the Second Intelligence Section or studied abroad. Those in question were selected through a competition, led by the head of M.St.M. of the Romanian Army and assisted by the head of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Intelligence Section.

The competition involved written and oral tests regarding the language of the country of accreditation and the French language, as well as a very good knowledge of the country/countries where future military attachés were to be accredited, from a geographical, historical, political, military, and economic point of view, etc. The selected officers completed a 6-month internship in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Information Section, before going abroad, where through study and personal work they thoroughly documented themselves in all areas regarding the future position. The normal duration of the mandate of aeronautical and naval military attachés was 3 years<sup>906</sup> with the possibility that M.St.M. of the Romanian Army to extend this term, if necessary.

Referring to the qualities that military attachés were supposed to possess and how they were to perform their duties, the Regulation stated that they had to show honor and dignity in all the circumstances in which they were, to show an attitude of respect for the government of the country in which he was accredited, to respect the religion, laws, decrees, and customs of the respective states. The regulation in question referred to the reports, studies, and other works drawn up by military attachés that had to be concise, and written precisely, without exaggerating or diminishing the content of the data and information, to avoid misinforming the M.St.M. of the Romanian Army and the head of the mission.

After the outbreak of the Second World War, in 1940, the Romanian military authorities developed the "Instructions related to the life and activity of military attachés and military missions sent abroad"<sup>907</sup>. Within them, reference was made to the behavior and limitations to which military attachés had to submit in the context of the "serious circumstances" Romania was going through, with its "shredded borders and precarious economic situation", living permanently under the threat of new territorial amputations<sup>908</sup>. According to the Instructions, the duty of military attachés was to "constitute a permanent example of correctness and sobriety through their entire life and attitude". To make them responsible, the negative example of the representatives of "recently liquidated states" was given, who, having arrived on the territory of our country, "indulged in attitudes whose joy would not have been justified except by the excitement of a victory. Such people characterize peoples who do not have the right to live freely"<sup>909</sup>.

In this context, "the officers, first of all, had to represent the faithful image of their country through modesty, through the measure of their actions, through their correctness, seriousness and dignity"<sup>910</sup>. As a mission, by the nature of the position they held, the military, aeronautical, and naval attachés were the first to see that all officers outside the frontiers fully complied with the above principles. The Instructions also called for the moderation of military attachés, in the sense that, although they had reduced monetary rights, they had to "ensure an honorable life, establish the necessary connections in the respective military world and represent our country with dignity"<sup>911</sup>.

An appeal was made to the sobriety and dignity that the Romanian officers in general and the military attachés, in particular, had to show, the latter being instructed to abandon the system of banquets, luxurious tables, and lavish receptions, which proved not to give results commensurate with the expenses. Instead, they are recommended to send a simple invitation to the table that could facilitate him to form a friendship that will help him in the future. Attention was drawn to the fact that those in such positions were not sent for enrichment and that they had the duty to spend only what was strictly necessary for the most honorable representation of

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<sup>905</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 21

<sup>906</sup> The previous regulations stipulated that the term of office of military attachés be 4 years.

<sup>907</sup> Romanian Military Archives, Pitești, *Instructions related to the life and activity of military attachés and military missions sent abroad*, Fund Studies and searches, Folder No. crt. 20, ff. 86-89

<sup>908</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 86

<sup>909</sup> *Idem*

<sup>910</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 87

<sup>911</sup> *Idem*

our army. General Staff of the Romanian Army, through the II Section, was monitoring whether or not the military attachés were following the new Instructions, emphasizing that "those found guilty will be recalled immediately and noted accordingly"<sup>912</sup>.

In conclusion, the military, aeronautical, and naval attachés and their helpers, being the official representatives of the Romanian Army, had the obligation to conform and "merge with the principles of morality, sobriety, correctness and dignity"<sup>913</sup>.

In 1941, on the orders of Ion Antonescu, at that time head of the state, the Instructions regarding the operation of the Legations and the coordination of the action of the country's representatives abroad were drawn up<sup>914</sup>. According to these Instructions, no agent, military, commercial, press attaché, cultural advisor, or other possible representatives of the various special services - could carry out any activity or undertake any more important undertaking, without the prior consultation and consent of the head of the diplomatic mission. Those in question were thus placed under the authority of the head of mission, from both the point of view of their activity and the administrative point of view (for example, the working hours and furlough could not be set by the department they depended on, without the consent of the head of mission).

Also, the Instructions forbade various ministries or authorities to communicate directly with their agents, in which framework they were obliged to send them instructions exclusively through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which transmitted the respective communications to the head of mission, and the latter had to forward them to those in right. The same rules will be observed in the communications and reports of the agents to the authorities on which they depend. Moreover, "the head of mission being the best able to appreciate the local situation and the nature of Romania's relations with the country in which he was accredited, he could communicate to the authorities from which they sent the respective instructions or communications, the possible points of view he would have to formulate on them"<sup>915</sup>.

Exceptionally, the military attachés could communicate, in code, directly with the authorities on which they depended, information of a purely military nature, with the mention that those communications had to be brought to the attention of the head of the legation. The authors of the Instructions drew attention to the fact that they should not be interpreted in the sense of limiting the activity of military attachés, who remain free to formulate any reports they consider useful on matters related to their mission. Those reports were to be communicated to the M.St.M. of the Romanian Army through the head of mission and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The instructions caused a real controversy between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of War, through M.St.M. of the Romanian Army. Thus, when the opinion of the General Staff of the Romanian Army was sought, it tried to convince the representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the negative effect that the provisions of the new Instructions had on the activity of the military attachés<sup>916</sup>. The main disadvantages identified by the representatives of M.St.M. of the Romanian Army were the following:

- "It would delay, if not annihilate the informational action of our military attachés, in that they are no longer allowed to report directly to M.St.M. of the Romanian Army, but only through the Heads of Mission, and the M.St.M. of the Romanian Army sends instructions only through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

- It would jeopardize the preservation of secrecy, since there are some matters whose "intricacy" requires that they not be known, except by the one who orders and the one who receives the order;

- It would contravene the Regulation of Military Attachés (drafted by Mr. Marshal Antonescu at the time when he was the Head of the M.St.M. of the Romanian Army), which through its provisions categorically removes too much interference of the Head of Mission in the attributions of the military attaché"<sup>917</sup>.

In the submitted proposals, M.St.M. of the Romanian Army specified that he did not want to block the cooperation between the military attachés and the heads of missions, stressing that collaboration should only

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<sup>912</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 88

<sup>913</sup> *Idem*

<sup>914</sup> Romanian Military Archives, Pitești, *Instructions regarding the operation of the Legations and the coordination of the action of the country's representatives abroad were drawn up*, Fund Studies and searches, No. crt. 311, ff. 29-31

<sup>915</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 30

<sup>916</sup> Romanian Military Archives, Pitești, *The contestation of the M.St.M. of the Romanian Army to the Instructions regarding the operation of the Legations and the coordination of the action of the country's representatives abroad*, Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bucharest, the problem 82, Vol 10, ff. 51-52

<sup>917</sup> *Idem*

refer to matters of a political, economic, and social nature, following that their technical-military activity would remain entirely independent and exempt from being presented to the heads of mission.

Consequently, M.St.M. of the Romanian Army proposed a series of changes/completions, which mainly referred to the independence of the military attachés from the head of the mission and the possibility for them to communicate directly with the representatives of the M.St.M. of the Romanian Army, both proposals referring strictly to purely military matters. Despite all the arguments offered, the response of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not satisfy M.St.M. of the Romanian Army, in the sense that it was decided that, without changing the content of the Instructions, a supplement with the following contents would be sent to the legations: "in completely exceptional cases, if it is a matter of military secrets of the highest rigor, the military attachés can communicate directly with M.St.M. of the Romanian Army, to avoid any delay or risk of knowledge of the communicated secret information"<sup>918</sup>. Apart from this exception, it was decided not to make any changes to the text of the Instructions and their application.

The last document we want to refer to is the "Law for the organization of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Romania"<sup>919</sup> from 1944, which has some provisions regarding military attachés. According to the act, within the legation military services were performed by military attachés, appointed following military laws and the rules of international law. Like the previous regulations, the document emphasized that no member of the legation<sup>920</sup> was allowed to work directly with the military authorities in the country, except through the head of mission and the Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The only exception was the military attachés, who, apart from the services entrusted to them by the head of mission (to whom he was responsible for their performance), could directly address the Ministry of the Army, respectively M.St.M. of the Romanian Army, "for strictly military matters and regarding confidential or exceptionally urgent measures"<sup>921</sup>.

## Conclusions

In conclusion, we can state that the legal foundations for the functioning of the Institution of Military Attachés in Romania were developed and put into practice by two state institutions - the Ministry of War and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Thus, the activity of the military attachés, from the perspective of the role and place they occupied within the legations, was regulated by the broader provisions, regarding the way of their organization and operation, elaborated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Regarding the aspects related to the professional activity of the military attachés, respectively their attributions and duties, were regulated by the Instructions, Regulations, and Directives developed by the Ministry of War, through the M.St.M. of the Romanian Army. Also, the professional subordination and coordination of the military attachés is carried out by the M.St.M. of the Romanian Army, Second Section Intelligence, an institution that evaluates their activity.

The Institution of Military Attachés has proven to be a useful tool for promoting the national military policy, contributing both to the fulfillment of the objectives of the national and military policy promoted by our state, as well as to providing the necessary data and information to the leading factors for making political-military decisions. The role of a military attaché is diverse and requires a deep understanding of military affairs, diplomatic skills, and the ability to navigate a complex international relationship.

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<sup>918</sup> *Idem*

<sup>919</sup> Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bucharest, *Law for the organization of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Romania*, The problem 82, Vol 9, ff. 80-87

<sup>920</sup> Diplomatic, consular, economic, cultural and press, military, or special agent.

<sup>921</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 87

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