

Former Royal Navy Minehunter Commissioned into the Romanian Navy for Black Sea Operations

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A former Royal Navy minehunter has officially joined the Romanian Navy, marking a step forward in regional security cooperation and potentially strengthening NATO's maritime presence in the Black Sea. The vessel, previously known as HMS Pembroke, was commissioned as Căpitan

Constantin Dumitrescu (M217) during a formal ceremony at Rosyth, Scotland, on 4 August.

The transfer was arranged under a government-to-government agreement announced in 2023, under which the United Kingdom agreed to sell two Sandown-class minehunters, HMS Pembroke and HMS Blyth, to Romania. The first of the two vessels, HMS Blyth, was delivered in late 2023 and now operates as Sublocotenent Ion Ghiculescu (M270).

Before entering Romanian service, HMS Pembroke underwent refurbishment and capability upgrades at Babcock's shipyard in Scotland. The modernisation included updated minehunting systems, structural improvements, and enhanced sonar capabilities. Both vessels were prepared under the oversight of the Defence Equipment Sales Authority and received tailored training support from the Royal Navy.

Crews from the Romanian Navy participated in training programmes delivered by the Royal Navy, including operational sea training and defence readiness sessions to support a smooth transition into active service. The Sandown-class minehunters, known for their low magnetic signature and high-definition sonar, are designed to detect and dispose of naval mines using unmanned systems and clearance divers. With a length of over 50 metres and a displacement of around 600 tonnes, these ships remain relevant for modern mine countermeasure operations.

Romania is expected to deploy the newly commissioned vessel as part of its 146th Mine Countermeasures Division, which contributes to Black Sea security, an area reportedly impacted by drifting sea mines linked to regional conflict. The addition of these minehunters complements

ongoing NATO mine clearance operations involving other regional allies, including Bulgaria and Turkey.

Major General Rich Cantrill, Commander Operations of the Royal Navy, said the vessel could play a key role in maritime security efforts in the region and highlighted growing defence ties between the UK and Romania.

The transfer also reflects the gradual retirement of the UK's Sandown-class fleet, with only two vessels, HMS Penzance and HMS Bangor, remaining in Royal Navy service. The class is being replaced by autonomous mine countermeasure platforms as part of the UK's evolving maritime strategy.