

Moldovan President Sandu Cares Little for Her Country's Sovereignty

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Global Research, October 05, 2022

[InfoBrics](#)

Region: [Europe](#)

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Moldovan **President Maia Sandu** told Russian pranksters Vovan and Lexus, in thinking she was speaking to Ukrainian **Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal**, about her willingness to transfer the southern town of Giurgiulești to Kiev for several years.

"When I was in Kiev, we discussed the issue of the village of Giurgiulești and made a proposal. Its people came and inspected the territory, which we are ready to give them while we are still trying to resolve the legal problems with the port as a whole. But we can offer them land for years to come," Sandu said during the prank, which was posted on the Vovan and Lexus Telegram channel. However, she continued by saying that after the technicians arrived and inspected the territory, the Moldovan authorities received no further response.

"So, I wonder if he is still interested in this proposal or if he has already found other solutions," Sandu said, referring to the Ukrainian prime minister.

None-the-less, the Presidential Administration of Moldova declared that the video recording of the conversation between Sandu and the Russian pranksters is a fake. The denial is because giving away Giurgiulești would be a major scandal as it is the home of Moldova's only port that is accessible to seagoing vessels.

The prank, which demonstrates that Sandu is ready to throw away Moldova's sovereignty to Ukraine, comes as a security aide claimed that Moldova can no longer rely only on its neutral status and must ramp up its defensive military power. This is despite the country being one of the poorest in Europe, reflected in the fact that it can allocate only 0.45% of GDP for defence spending despite war waging in neighbouring Ukraine.

Moldova applied for European Union membership this year and strongly condemned Russia's military operation in Ukraine. However, the country also contends with the fact that

Russian peacekeepers are based in its breakaway Transnistria region and relies heavily on Russia for energy.

“Moldova can no longer rely exclusively on foreign policy instruments, one of which is its neutral status, to ensure state stability,” said Dorin Recean, the security aide. “Moldova must start work on increasing its defence potential... The authorities need to obtain the conscious support of citizens who should understand it is critical to the state’s survival.”

For his part, Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, **Nicu Popescu**, said during a press conference that the strengthening of partnerships in the field of security and defence with states and organisations is a key objective. These partnerships will continue and even be strengthened, he added.

Asked if the authorities in Chisinau intend to take steps to strengthen relations with NATO, Popescu stated that the authorities in Chisinau want to modernise their defence capabilities to the highest international standards, and this implies strengthening external partnerships, including in the field of security and defence.

“This involves strengthening our partnerships with Great Britain, but also other states and organisations. You know very well that we have defence partnerships with the United States of America and the European Union through the European peace initiative. We have a partnership with NATO, for a very long time, based on the individual action plan initiated in 2006,” declared Popescu.

Given that Ukraine has humiliatingly lost Crimea, Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporozhye to Russia, it must be questioned whether Giurgiulești, situated on the border of Moldova, Romania and Ukraine, might be a pathetic appeasement for Kiev and perhaps be a condition for Moldova to one day join NATO.

It also comes as protests against Sandu increase, especially as energy prices are skyrocketing. Moldova’s gas regulator raised prices by 27% for households on September 21. Romanian **Prime Minister Nicolae Ciucă** said earlier this month that there were discussions with the Moldovan Prime Minister to deliver gas to Moldova, but this cannot be more than five million cubic metres of gas per day.

“I discussed with Prime Minister Gavrilița, 150 million cubic metres... We still have to see what quantities we can secure in the next period. In warehouses today, we have stored... about 87%, which means that if we manage to have contracts signed for the winter period, to maintain the balance in the system and to have the necessary quantities on cold days, we can ensure the respective quantity,” the Romanian Prime Minister declared to the press.

At the same time, Ciucă stated that Romania cannot provide Moldova with the necessary gas if Russia stops deliveries.

In this way, Moldova finds itself in a difficult position as its pro-Western president is even willing to sacrifice sovereignty for the sake of Ukraine. Now there are discussions of Moldova growing its military budget with the aim of eventually joining NATO despite the fact that Moldova is already one of the poorest countries in Europe, which is amplified as living costs are soaring.

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