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MORNING NEWS SUMMARY October 13, 2016

*The Morning News Summary compiles Romanian language press stories relevant to Embassy Bucharest, and other
USG officials. The information is not independently verified.*

Bilateral— Regional/NATO

Domestic

Economic

Domestic

Plagiarism: the European Commission and PM React

While in Bucharest, Science, Research and Innovation Commissioner Carlos Moedas issued a press statement saying that it is a priority of the European Union to be stricter and tougher on plagiarism. He warned that if the rules are not respected, Romania will pay a very expensive price. Separately, PM Ciolos said in the Government meeting that he regrets the decision made by Parliament to cut the National Council for Certification of Titles, Diplomas and University Certificates (CNATDCU) powers, and the way that plagiarism is being dealt with. He regretted the resignation of CNATDCU president, Viorel Barbu, calling him a neutral professional. Ciolos warned that there are too many doctoral schools in Romania, adding that no law can decide whether a paper has been plagiarized, but only honest and objective researchers and professionals. Yesterday, CNATDCU issued a final verdict concerning plagiarism charges against former Interior Minister Petre Toba and Voluntari Mayor Florin Pandele.* Separately, the Prosecutor General started the criminal investigation against the Bucharest Sector 3 Mayor Robert Negoita for instigation to falsify documents, abuse of office, and use of false documents in connection with his PhD paper. Police Academy asked the withdrawal of Negoita's PhD title claiming his paper was plagiarized. (Mediafax, Digi24, mainstream media)

**Comment: After extensive technical research into the PhD theses of Petre Toba and Florin Pandele, the General Council of CNATDCU concluded that their papers were plagiarized. The vote was 36 in favor and one against. It is important to note that this is not a final conclusion. CNATDCU is only one body on the circuit of institutions analyzing PhD papers. The final decision regarding the withdrawal of the PhD title stands with the Education Minister. Media continued to comment negatively on the future fallout from the recently passed education bill on academia and public integrity writ large.*

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NO DISCERNIBLE CLASSIFICATION**Press One: Laura Codruta Kovesi's PhD papers included a series of suspicious paragraphs**

Press One analyzed the DNA Chief Prosecutor's paper and said that several paragraphs over three pages are copied without quotations from a book on organized crime by Damian Miclea. Three other paragraphs are copied from a paper on fighting trans-border crime by an SRI officer. Kovesi has also mistakenly written the name of a Scottish author, and used quotations which similarly appeared in the work of another author. She also used quotations from her previous published articles without quoting them. Press One comments that Kovesi's case is not similar with those of Victor Ponta, Gabriel Oprea or Petre Toba who have massively plagiarized their papers but it raises suspicions due to the numbers of omissions and mistakes. High-profile defense attorney Gheorghe Mateut, who looked at Kovesi's PhD paper at CNATCDU's request in 2012, said on Realitatea TV in his opinion the paper was not plagiarized and blamed what he saw as a very consequential, "orchestrated campaign to damage trust in the judiciary." (**Press One, Realitatea TV**)

Comment: Press One journalist and university teacher Emilia Sercan has analyzed most PhD papers by top Romanian politicians suspected of plagiarism. Most independent observers increasingly note that the issue of Kovesi's alleged plagiarism needs to be swiftly looked into and clarified.

Romania refuses Canada's offer on visas

Unlike Bulgaria, the Romanian Government refused Canada's first offer to gradually lift visas for Romanians until May 2018. Romanian officials were not satisfied with the offer and asked for a firmer deadline of 2017. (**Digi24**)

PSD lawmaker calls for action against Soros people

Over the past days, the PSD Deputy Ninel Peia (of Ilfov) launched several public messages urging Romanians to take action against "the 22,000 Soros people" who are national traitors, attack Romania's religion, have key positions, and work with all their powers against Romania. The list of "traitors" includes politicians, magistrates, NGO members, intellectuals, artists, students, etc. He posted several photos with personalities including members of the Ciolos government. These include: USR leaders Clotilde Armand and Nicusor Dan, MEP Monica Macovei, Former Foreign Affairs Minister Andrei Plesu, philosopher Horia Roman Patapievici, singer and artist Tudor Chirila, NGO's representatives Alina Mungiu Pippidi and Cristina Guseth, etc.

In additional Soros news, Revista 22 recently reported that PRU politicians Sebastian Ghita and Bogdan Diaconu announced the introduction of a draft law to ban NGOs members which received funding from George Soros to occupy any public position in Romania. Analyst Cristian Campeanu compared these stances with those of Erdogan in Turkey. Campeanu warned that the nationalists intend to separate Romania from the West, and re-orient it towards the Orthodox Russia which they say it is closer in space and spirit than the American, capitalist even Jewish foreigners embodied by Soros. Campeanu warned that the new nationalist parties PRU, ANR, FN were set up to electorally help an alliance between Liviu Dragnea and Calin Popescu Tariceanu who pose as the saviors of Romanian farmers, capital, ancient Orthodoxy protecting it from the assault of the western neo-colonialists. Separately, analyst Ioan Bujor explained in **Vice Romania** that the nationalist message promoted by Marian Munteanu and his ANR is very appealing and skillfully constructed, considering that Munteanu is trained in anthropology and political sciences. ANR targets foreigners, banks, foreign investments claiming that they support national values and family. (**Romania Curata, Revista 22, Vice Romania, others**)

Comment: Since 1990, the Soros's Foundation for Open Society was one of the main donors in Romania and other former communist countries, financing sociological research, education, social inclusion, good governance, civic culture and integrated community intervention. The most influential Romanian NGOs, politicians, researchers and others have benefitted from its scholarships. Over the past 26 years, a series of political parties, mainly PSD and its political allies, have blamed NGOs, intellectuals, cultural personalities of eroding Romania's economy, territorial autonomy, public order or the health of the population. Independent

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analysts warned about the danger of such messaging which creates social shifts and turns Romania back to communist practices.

1.4(D)

Media NGOs warn that the annulment of the TV and radio tax will turn public media services in political services

Three media organizations warned that Liviu Dragnea's draft law aimed to annul 102 taxes, including those for public radio and TV, is profoundly altering the public mission these media outlets and that it will subordinate them to politics. The proposal was made without any impact study on the budget or a public debate in a non-transparent manner, aimed to trivialize the subject. The NGOs recalled that the laws governing public media are organic and any changes need to answer the Constitutional requirements and the Parliament's regulations. Active Watch, Center for Independent Journalism and the Convention Media Organizations urged politicians to act responsible, transparent and organize public debates on the issue. (FreeEx, Pagina de Media, others)

Economic News**Official: Catastrophe risk coefficients in Romania are among the highest in the region**

Misu Negritoiu, President of the Financial Supervisory Authority (ASF) in Romania, pointed out that the catastrophe risks (floods and earthquake) in Romania are among the highest in the region. In the first half of 2016, the household insurance policies penetration degree had reached 19.4% in Romania, compared with 17.7% in 2015. "The activity (on the household insurance segment) is increasing, but the number of contracts is still small," Negritoiu added. Overall, in the first semester of 2016, the household insurance segment (both mandatory and voluntary policies) reported a 10% increase of gross written premiums compared with the same period last year, reaching RON 249.4 (approximately USD 61 million). On June 30, the number of active household insurance contracts had reached 3.3 million. Romania has 8.9 million households. Negritoiu made the statement at the he International Catastrophic Risks Forum in Bucharest. Floods which hit Romania over the past days affected 25 counties, mostly eastern counties of Galati, Bacau and Buzau. Interior Ministry announced the evacuation of 530 people. The Government allotted RON 87 million (USD 21 mn) to local authorities to repair damaged infrastructure. (Asig.ro; most media)

Cernavoda's 3, 4 nuclear units to be included in Romania's future energy strategy

"In almost all scenarios, there is room for the reactors 3 and 4 in the nuclear industry," said Minister of Energy, Victor Grigorescu. He added that Cernavoda reactors 3 and 4 will be included in Romania's energy strategy, and the Government has already invested EUR 1 billion in this project and has the necessary experience for developing it. However, the coal will remain an important resource of Romanian energy mix. Currently, the coal provides about 30 percent of the national electricity production in Romania through Oltenia and Hunedoara energy plants. Nuclear energy provides about 20 percent of the electric power generated nationally through reactors Cernavoda's 1 and 2 reactors. Romania is currently negotiating with the Chinese company CGN the construction of 3 and 4 Cernavoda units. The project of reactors 3 and 4 will create 16,000 new jobs in the domestic industry, according to specialists (Romania Journal, Agerpres, etc.)

Bilateral/Regional – NATO

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Daniel Fried the State Department's Coordinator for Sanctions Policy said that "...without the sanctions the situation might well be much worse." In an interview in Bucharest at the middle of September, Fried outlined that it is important in every generation to remind why Western solidarity is critical. He said that sanctions work in two ways. One way -- is that without the sanctions the situation might well be much worse. The Russians could have driven deeper into Ukraine and they could have tried to seize Mariupol or driven on land all the way to Crimea or attack Harkhiv. The sanctions may have stopped the Russians from going further. Second, and related, the sanctions may have provided a greater opening for diplomacy than would have been otherwise the case. Without sanctions there might not have even been the Minsk framework. So they've worked in these two ways but they've not yet worked in a third way because there is still Russian support for separatists and indeed Russians all over the Donbas. But with sanctions patience is important. Fried said Romania has to be congratulated for its role in NATO and its wish to spend more on defense matters. The U.S. is likely to enter in this kind of burden-sharing discussion. The argument for NATO being a valuable investment is strong, it is even stronger now than when Secretary Gates spoke because what happened in Ukraine, because of the Russian aggression. But his point is still a good one: we must recall what it is we set out to achieve, said Fried. (Adevarul, Defence Matters)

Republic of Moldova poll: increased support for union with Romania

Some 34% Moldovans will vote for a union between Republic of Moldova and Romania, said a poll by the Center of Sociological Research (CSR) quoted by **Radio Chisinau**. A May 2016 poll said that 17% are in favor of the union. However, this month poll says only 4% of Moldovans will vote for unionists at the elections that will take place on October 30. A CSR official said that 31% of those polled in October are totally against a union. Some 51% want Moldova to join the EU, and 43% want it to join the Customs Union. Some 42% are in favor of joining NATO, while 35% could not give an answer. (Hotnews)

Romania, France conducted Black Sea military exercise

An air and navy live fire exercise occurred this week in the Black Sea, staged by five Romanian military ships of the Fleet Command and France's Le Premier-Maître L'Her (F 792) frigate. Le Premier-Maître L'Her joined Romania's King Ferdinand frigate (which had a helicopter aboard), two corvettes, two missile-bearing ships and three MIG 21 Lancer aircraft of the Romanian Air Force, in what was said to be a very complex exercise that allowed the crews to train in air, surface and submarine combat. (Digi24, Agerpres, Hotnews, etc.)

Guccifer returns to Romania after U.S. conviction

Marcel Lehel Lazar, the 44-year-old Romanian national known online as "Guccifer," has returned to Romania on Tuesday after being convicted in the US on hacking and identity theft charges. Guccifer has been incarcerated at the Rahova Penitentiary, where he will spend 21 days before authorities decide where he will serve his time. Lazar was sentenced in early September by a court in the Eastern District of Virginia to 52 months in prison. Lazar was initially charged with wire fraud, unauthorized access to a protected computer, cyber stalking, aggravated identity theft and obstruction of justice. After being extradited from Romania to the U.S., he pleaded guilty to unauthorized access to a protected computer and aggravated identity theft. Guccifer became famous after hacking the online accounts of members of the Bush family. He later targeted the accounts of former Secretary of State Colin Powell, journalists, actors, former members of the U.S. Cabinet and the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, and a former presidential advisor. He also claimed to have hacked Hillary Clinton's private email server, but failed to prove it. Lazar was arrested in Romania in 2014 and sentenced to 7 years in prison for accessing the email accounts of politician Corina Cretu and of George Maior, who at the time was the head of the country's intelligence service. Lazar had previously received a three-year suspended sentence for breaking into the online accounts of numerous local celebrities. (Mediafax, ProTV, etc.)

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Agerpres – Romanian government-owned national wire service.

Adevarul – national, generally-independent daily owned by businessman Cristian Burci.

Aktual24 – news and analyses website run by journalist Andrei Badin

Antena 1 & 3 – ratings-leading TV channels owned by mogul Dan Voiculescu's (PC party, PSD) Intact Media. Often stridently critical of rule of law institutions, prosecutors, the U.S. and EU. Voiculescu is in prison for corruption and Intact Media has been charged with blackmailing cable provider RCS&RDS.

Azi – PSD's newspaper, with small circulation. It is run by the PSD's former secretary general Octavian Stireanu.

B1TV – all-news television owned by businessmen Sorin Oancea (50%) and George Constantin Paunescu (50%).

BreakingNews24.ro – news website, close to PSD, Antena 3.

Bursa – private business daily published by Meta Ring SRL (coordinated by senior journalist Florian Goldstein).

Click – Tabloid controlled by Adevarul Holding. No political stance.

Contributors.ro – Independent platform of analyses and commentaries

Cotidianul – online newspaper, owned by controversial senior journalist Cornel Nistorescu.

Curentul – national online daily owned by businessman Mihai Iacob.

Curierul National – private business daily coordinated by Adrian Voinea. Independent.

DCNews – online outlet, serving Dan Voiculescu's interests, controlled by Antena 3 employees and commentators.

Digi24 – professional TV news channel owned by cable provider RCS&RDS

Economica.net – Independent, private, online business website.

Europa FM – private radio owned by French company Lagardere. News oriented.

Evenimentul Zilei – national daily controlled by political consultant Dan Andronic. Two of the newspaper's alleged shareholders are Elena Udrea and Sebastian Ghita. Changing political agenda, supportive of Traian Basescu, Victor Ponta.

Formula AS – independent weekly founded in 1990 by journalist Sanziana Pop. Christian, pro-nature and healthy living orientation.

Flux24 – independent online outlet which sometimes posts sensationalist news, without any source. Unknown ownership.

Gandul – online news and feature portal owned by Mediafax Group (controlled by Adrian Sarbu).

Hotnews – independent online news publication supportive of rule of law institutions, small and medium entrepreneurs.

In Linie Dreapta – anti-communist, conservative news and analyses platform.

In Politics – news, analyses platform close to the PNL. Editor-in-Chief Bogdan Tiberiu Iacob.

Jurnalul National – national daily owned by mogul Dan Voiculescu's Intact Media. Often critical of rule of law, the U.S. and EU. Voiculescu is in prison for corruption and Intact Media has been charged with blackmailing cable provider RCS&RDS.

Kamikaze – independent investigative and satirical weekly

La Punkt – Independent platform of analyses and commentaries

Libertatea – Tabloid, owned by Swiss trust Ringier. Pro-PSD stances.

Mediafax – nationwide wire service part of Mediafax Group (controlled by Adrian Sarbu).

National – tabloid controlled by controversial businessman Iliuta Naghi. Changing political agenda.

News.Ro – Independent, private online news agency.

Politic Scan – A portal of political analyses, news and interviews, connected with sociologist Sebastian Lazaroiu.

Press One – independent online media outlet, owned by American businessman and philanthropist Don Lothrop

Pro TV – ratings-leading general television owned by Media Pro (owned by Central Media Enterprises. Time Warner has 39.10% of CME).

PS News – online news site operated by supporters of mogul Dan Voiculescu (PC party, PSD) and Sebastian Ghita

Profit.ro – Independent, private, online business website.

Puterea – according to media reports, the owners are unknown Russian investors, represented by Romanian businessman Adrian Thiess. Controlled by Georgian Puiu. Changing political agenda.

Radio Romania – Romanian public radio service with several channels. Includes **Rador**, wire service offering radio and TV transcripts.

Realitatea TV – all-news channel owned by political consultant and businessman Cozmin Gusa, supportive of PNL.

Republica – online independent outlet controlled by three reporters. Focused on features, interviews, young entrepreneurs.

Revista 22 – academic, intellectual, independent magazine

Ring – free newspaper distributed in Bucharest subway. It is the property of the PSD mayor of sector 3 Robert Negoita.

Romania Libera – independent national broadsheet daily owned by controversial businessman Dan Adamescu, often critical of PSD and outspoken in favor of rule of law institutions.

Romania Mare – extremist weekly founded by communist writers Corneliu Vadim Tudor and Eugen Barbu. Unknown ownership.

Romania TV (RTV) – all-news television owned by mogul and PSD deputy Sebastian Ghita, supportive of PSD.

Reporter Virtual – independent online platform for news and analyses

Stiri pe Surse – online news platform close to Dan Voiculescu and PNL. It features the controversial commentator Sorin Rosca Stanescu.

TVR – Romanian public national television network with several channels.

Voice of Russia (VOR), Russia Today, Sputnik.md – online websites in Romanian language; owned by the Government of Russia (virulently anti-West).

Wall-Street.ro – Independent, private, online business website.

Ziare.com – independent online news and editorial platform owned by U.S. investment fund Broadhurst, often serving as an aggregator.

Ziarul Financiar – private business daily published by Mediafax Group.

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