

Beat: Local

Death toll rises to 9 in Romanian military helicopter crash

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USPA News - A military pilot, who was critically injured last month when his helicopter crashed in central Romania while en-route to a training exercise with U.S. forces, has died, raising the death toll from the accident to nine, the country's defense ministry said Monday. The accident happened at around 10:40 a.m. local time on November 21 when a Romanian-built IAR-330 aircraft went down in a field near the village of Măflăcra, located in Sibiu County of Transylvania.

Eight people were found dead at the scene of the crash while the other two occupants were seriously injured. University Emergency Hospital (SUUMC) in the capital Bucharest said Captain Commander Gabriel Corneliu Titiana, 46, died at 12:30 p.m. on Monday. "The soldier, who was in a serious condition after the crash of the helicopter, was operated several times, but his health prognosis was at all times uncertain," the defense ministry said in a statement. All military units in Romania, as well as those which are stationed outside of the country, will be called out on early Tuesday morning to participate in military and religious ceremonies in honor of Captain Titiana. "This is a sad day for the Romanian Army and, together with the entire staff of the military, we are with the family of Captain Commander Gabriel Corneliu Titiana," defense minister Mircea Dușa said. Titiana, who was an experienced pilot with more than 1,300 flight hours, was married with two children. The November 21 accident happened when the helicopter was flying from the 71st Air Base in Cluj County to participate in a training exercise with U.S. forces in Brașov County. U.S. Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel previously expressed his condolences over the deadly crash, calling Romania a "stalwart ally and partner of the United States." Romania has experienced a number of aircraft accidents over the past few years. Five Ukrainian citizens were killed in April 2012 when a private helicopter crashed in eastern Romania while en-route to extinguish a fire in Turkey, and ten soldiers were killed in July 2010 when an Antonov An-2 aircraft crashed in southeastern Romania.

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