

US and NATO military bases in Bulgaria

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Map of locations of US and NATO military bases in Bulgaria

Joint US-Bulgarian military bases established according to the Defense Cooperation Agreement between the United States and Bulgaria:

- Bezmer Air Base in Yambol Province
- Novo Selo Range in Sliven Province
- Aitos Logistics Center in Burgas Province
- Graf Ignatievo Air Base in Plovdiv Province

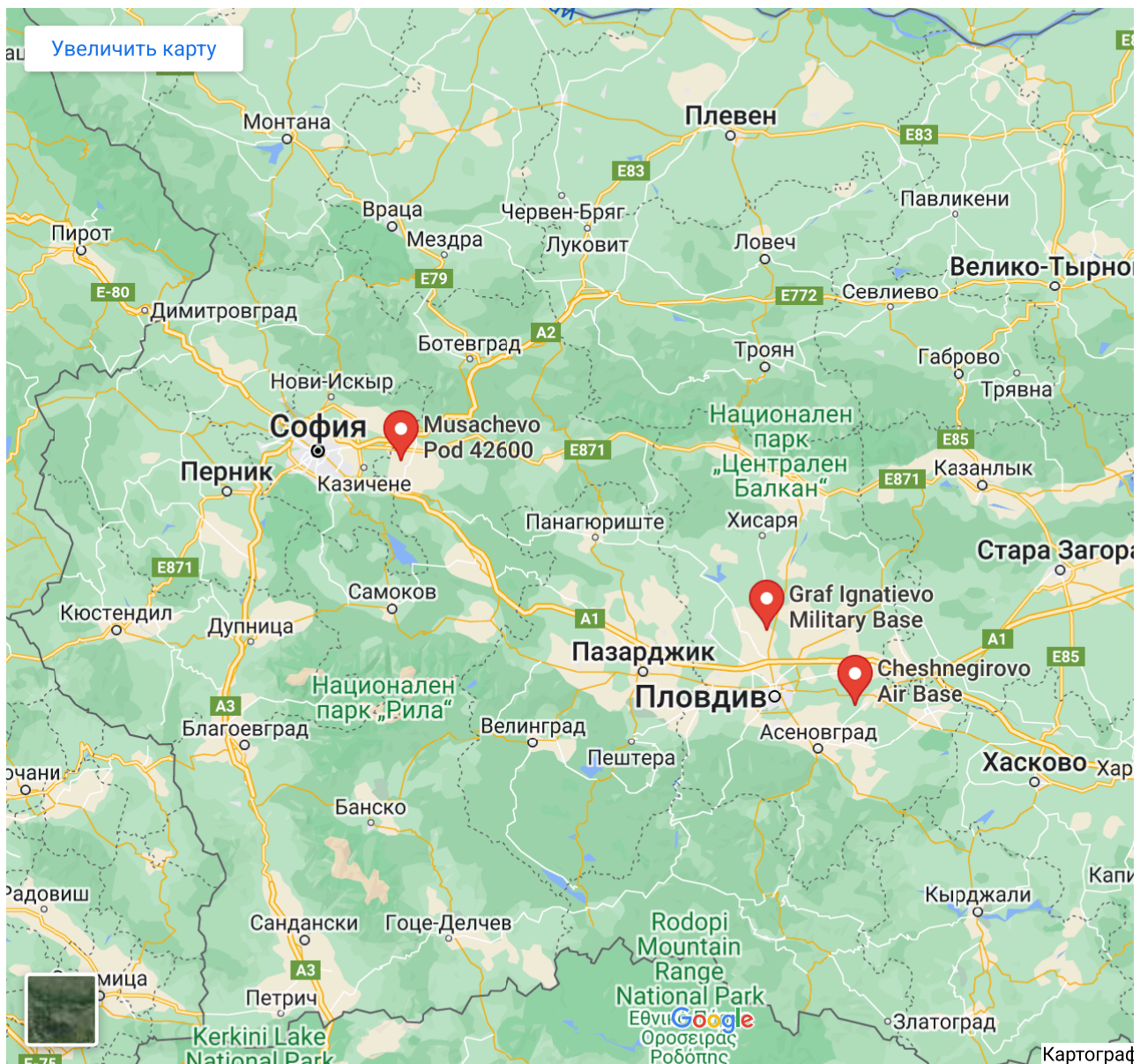
Bulgaria: the Novo Selo test site (Sliven, a division of the rotational armored brigade, us Vivt warehouses); the Koren test site (Haskovo), the Graf Ignatievo AVB (periodic deployment of aircraft for patrolling Bulgarian airspace) and Krumovo, the Bezmer airfield, and the Aytos military base (us Vivt warehouses) are being upgraded. In the interests of the naval forces of the NATO countries, the infrastructure of the naval base "Varna" and the home point of the Bulgarian Navy "Burgas" is being expanded.

Back in 2006, Sofia and Washington agreed to cooperate in the defense sector. The Pentagon then received the air bases "Bezmer (Yambol city) and "Count Ignatievo"(Plovdiv city). But the biggest acquisition of the Americans was the Novo Selo test site (near the city of Sliven). The Bulgarian leadership then assured its population that the temporary deployment of American troops on the territory of the country would not only strengthen the security of Bulgaria, but also significantly affect the development of its national armed forces and economy. Local media in those days wrote that as part of the joint military exercises, the quality of training of the Bulgarian Armed forces has increased, additional opportunities have appeared for re-equipping Bulgarian military units and bringing them to NATO standards, as well as attracting American funds to modernize the Bulgarian military infrastructure. After all, the Pentagon has invested almost \$ 60 million in the development of the Novo Selo test site alone. Immediately after being re-elected for a second term, Barack Obama summoned the entire Bulgarian leadership to Washington in early December 2012. They were Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borisov, foreign Minister Nikolai Mladenov, defense Minister Anyu Angelov, and interior Minister Tsvetan Tsvetanov. It is clear that the public was not particularly told about the details of the conversations. All Bulgarian news agencies cited only the words of their Prime Minister that the US President, contrary to expectations, did not make a single comment to the Bulgarian government. But a few days later - on December 17, 2012-it became known that Bulgaria was deploying a contingent of American troops on its territory on a permanent basis. The Sofia newspaper Trud reported to its readers that Bulgarian defense Minister Anu Angelov met with representatives of the Pentagon and the US state Department and asked them to increase the number of military personnel at the Novo Selo test site and place a permanent military command of the US army there. The Bulgarian defense Ministry explained their actions by saying that this will increase security in the region. The US is not in the best financial position and it has become much more difficult to spread billions of dollars around the world. Now NATO member States need to invest more in defense, despite the fact that public opinion in some countries of the Alliance is in favor of reducing military spending. This position was expressed on October 11 by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen,

speaking in the Croatian city of Dubrovnik at a meeting of the NATO parliamentary Assembly. "We have no alternative. We must continue to invest in defense, and we must continue to invest in the Alliance in a political, military and economic sense," Rasmussen said. Addressing the deputies, the Secretary General noted that the task of the people's deputies is to convey to their voters that "such a contribution carries not only costs, but also benefits." "Freedom is not free," he concluded. It is true that "freedom is not free." You have to pay a price for everything. But how poor Bulgaria and her neighbors will take the "extra" funds for the development of defense? Bulgaria is the poorest country in the European Union. The majority of Bulgarians are living from paycheck to paycheck. On average, the employee receives only 400 euros. Unemployment in the country is 10 %. Now 49% of the population is below the poverty line.







Bulgaria's airfields for NATO needs

In Bulgaria, the main focus is on improving the infrastructure of the Bezmer and Graf-Ignatievo air bases. In 2016 work was completed on modernization of Bezmer airport, including lengthening the runway to 3,000 m, construction of new taxiways, Parking lots for AT and cargo terminal, improving access roads and adjacent equipment site. The cost of the completed works was about 36 million dollars. These funds were allocated to NATO under the program "Investment in security".

The Ministry of defense of Bulgaria has started modernizing its military infrastructure as part of the improvement process

Graf-Ignatievo air base. The plans provide for the replacement of runway coverings and taxiways, the installation of modern

radio navigation and lighting equipment, construction of additional Parking lots for AT, construction of a new one

a maintenance point for aircraft and fuel storage, as well as a warehouse for storing military equipment. Total amount

the contract is worth about \$ 30 million.

Military exercises in Bulgaria 2020

The joint Bulgarian-American exercise "Thracian Summer 2020" was held from August 19 to 28. They were attended by 650 soldiers of the Bulgarian Air Force, Joint Special Operations Command,

Naval Forces and Ground Forces, as well as 150 soldiers of the 37th Transport Squadron of the US Air Force in Europe. The main tasks of the maneuvers were: improving the operational compatibility of training participants, working out joint actions as part of international operational forces, as well as improving the level of tactical training of special forces and aviation units. In particular, during the exercises, the American military-technical forces C-130 "Hercules" performed group flights at an ultra-low altitude, ensuring the stealth approach to the landing point, carried out the release of cargo from a height of about 100 m and the landing of tactical troops from 400 m with the forced opening of parachutes. The Bulgarian military aircraft "Spartan" demonstrated a high-speed landing on a limited platform from a height of 3.5 thousand meters, which is carried out in combat conditions. The Cougar and Mi-17 helicopters worked out the tasks of military medical evacuation and non-parachute landing of special forces.

Military exercises in Bulgaria in 2020

Exercises of the Bulgarian Navy "Breeze-2020" with the participation of naval units from nine countries were held from 10 to 19 July in the territorial waters and in the exclusive economic zone of Bulgaria, as well as at training grounds. The main part of the exercise was attended by about 2.4 thousand naval personnel of Bulgaria, Belgium, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Spain, Romania, the United States, Turkey and France, the 2nd permanent naval group of NATO ships and the 2nd permanent mine action group of NATO ships. In the maneuvers 27 warships, auxiliary vessels and boats were involved, as well as two aircraft and seven helicopters. The headquarters of the exercise was located at the base of the flotilla of combat and auxiliary ships in Burgas. The maneuvers were planned and conducted according to NATO standards and procedures.

Exercises in Bulgaria in July 2020

The exercises of the Bulgarian Navy "Breeze-2020" with the participation of naval units from nine countries were held from 10 to 19 July in territorial waters and in the exclusive economic zone of Bulgaria, as well as on landfills. The main part of the exercises was attended by about 2.4 thousand military personnel of the Navy of Bulgaria, Belgium, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Spain, Romania, USA, Turkey and France, the 2nd permanent naval group of NATO ships and the 2nd permanent mine action group NATO ships. The maneuvers involved 27 warships, auxiliary vessels and boats, as well as two aircraft and seven helicopters. The headquarters of the exercises was located at the base of the flotilla of combat and auxiliary ships in Burgas. The maneuvers were planned and conducted according to NATO standards and procedures.

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* A joint statement by US President D. Trump and Bulgarian Prime Minister B. Borisov refers to Washington and Sofia's desire to develop cooperation in the defense industry and the latter's commitments "to pay due attention to the proposals of American military-industrial companies wishing to compete in the Bulgarian market." At the same time, the United States noted that "the Balkan country plans to fulfill its long-term obligations on NATO defense spending by 2024."

* Following talks with the US President, Prime Minister B. Borisov said that Sofia is ready to host the NATO Coordination Center in the Black Sea, which will make it "safer."