

# Bulgaria: U.S. Paratroopers Stormed Civilian Business in NATO Military Exercise

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*U.S. Army Europe and Africa announced today that during the Swift Response 21 airborne military exercise last month along what is now called NATO’s Eastern Flank – from the Baltic to the Black Sea – troops with the 173rd Airborne Brigade ran a training exercise to practice seizing a decommissioned air base in Bulgaria that went terribly awry. In landing and attacking bunkers and other structures at the site in Cheshnegirovo the American paratroopers also assaulted a building that housed a private business with employees on site.*

Nothing daunted, [the Pentagon issued a release that stated “We always learn from these exercises and are fully investigating the cause of this mistake.”](#) During the Clinton administration’s and NATO’s 78-day air and missile war against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1999 a comparable “mistake” was made when a [NATO warplane fired a missile into a house in a suburb of the Bulgarian capital of Sofia](#). It’s not certain what lesson the military bloc learned from that attack. But when there are no repercussions for random armed assaults and missile attacks then there is little enough incentive to rectify such errors or to prevent their recurrence. NATO’s cause is always noble, we’ve been assured – *jus ad bellum* – so all its actions are necessarily justified – *jus in bello*.

Last month’s Swift Response war games included the participation of 7,000 airborne troops from the U.S. and ten of its NATO allies. [It concentrated on “joint forcible entry exercises” in Estonia, Bulgaria and Romania.](#) It began with 800 82nd Airborne paratroopers engaging in a large-scale, night-time jump over central Estonia, linking up with other American paratroopers already in Lithuania, and from there moved to the Black Sea. The entire purpose of the drills was to confront Russia and its allies (e.g, Belarus and Abkhazia) in the Baltic and Black Sea regions.

On May 10 hundreds of paratroopers from the U.S., Germany, the Netherlands, Poland and Romania parachuted into Romania. The nation’s Mihail Kogalniceanu Airbase was the headquarters for the entire Swift Response exercise this year. The base was employed by the U.S. for the 2003 war against Iraq even before Romania joined NATO in 2004. Since then it has been used for the U.S.’s and NATO’s war in Afghanistan. In 2009 the Pentagon

established a Permanent Forward Operating Site there. Since 2018 the British Royal Air Force has based four Eurofighter Typhoon combat aircraft at the air base as part of NATO's Enhanced Air Policing mission targeting Russia in the Black Sea.

In all fairness, [Bulgarians should have been warned in 2004 what NATO membership would entail](#) for them and their nation. But then again, NATO provided them an object lesson five years earlier.

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