



Galati: a Spanish jet shot down a drone that came in over Moldova

Romanian surveillance detected an aircraft entering national airspace at 04:44. Seventeen minutes later a Spanish F-18 destroyed it over farmland north of Galati. It did not come from Ukraine - it came in over Moldova.

INCIDENT DETAILS • 5WH

Who A Spanish Air and Space Force F-18 on NATO air policing from Mihail Kogalniceanu, with Romanian surveillance and command. Drone operator unidentified; no attribution given.

What An unidentified drone breached Romanian and therefore NATO airspace and was shot down - the fourth Romania has destroyed in 2026, after three in July.

Where Entered from the Republic of Moldova, about 24 km north of Galati. Debris fell between the villages of Baleni and Cudalbi, in unpopulated country.

When Overnight into Sunday 16 Aug 2026. Detected 04:44, engaged 05:01, alert lifted 05:20.

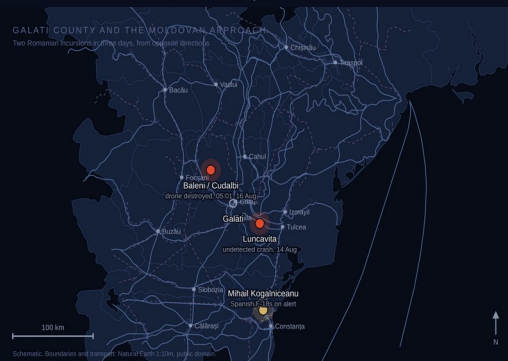
Why Not established. The ministry gave no type and no operator. The incursion came during a night of Russian strikes on Ukraine.

How Detected on entry, tracked, and engaged by a fighter already airborne. No detection failure reported. Casualties - none.

IMPACT

- Human: none. No casualties or damage; the engagement and debris fell in unpopulated farmland.
- The route: the aircraft reached NATO airspace over a country with no means of stopping it. Moldova is not in NATO, fields no fighters and has no allied air policing.
- Tempo: fourth Romanian shoot-down of the year and the second allied engagement on the eastern flank in three days.
- Moldova: a non-aligned state absorbing overflight it cannot answer, and now in effect an approach corridor to the alliance.

SEQUENCE OF EVENTS



- 24-26 Jul** Three drones downed by Romanian F-16s
- 9-10 Aug** A drone detonates in Moldova
- 14 Aug** Luncavita crossed undetected
- 04:44: detected entering from Moldova
 - Radar contact, then authorisation
 - 05:01: a Spanish F-18 destroys it
 - 05:20: alert lifted; no attribution

ASSESSMENT, LESSONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- The route through Moldova is the finding, not the shoot-down.
- A non-aligned neighbour is becoming an approach corridor, and that is a problem for it first.
- Detection decided the outcome again - the response capability is not in question, the detection floor is.
- It is almost certain incursions continue, and likely the approach vectors keep changing.