

Dear Sir/Madam,

We are writing to you in connection with the reports *Gang Selling AK-47s 'Bound For Western Europe'* (written) and *Criminal Gang Selling Military Weapons* (video) which your channel aired on Sunday, 07 August 2016.

We were surprised to hear Romania mentioned in the report since nobody from Sky News, Mr Stuart Ramsay who authored the report or anyone from his team, contacted the Embassy in London or any other Romanian institution for a chance to comment on the topic at hand. Airing a piece of news that could damage the image of a whole country by putting it in direct connection to terrorism and failing to ask anyone from that particular country for a point of view is something we cannot find a reasonable explanation to.

While we do not want to question the author's motives, the report makes several statements that are not backed by facts, despite the seemingly shocking video of the meeting with the gang members.

The report says: 'From the mountains of the Balkans across huge, remote forest lands in eastern Europe, networks of gangs have access to millions of weapons that have been cached after years of conflict or are in general supply in areas bordering conflict zones such as Ukraine.' And further down, 'Europe is awash with illegal guns and the Schengen (sic!) border treaty makes it virtually impossible to track or stop their movement.'

Here are a few facts that the author should have straightened up before publication. First of all, Romania is not a Balkan country being separated from that region by the Danube and it has not been a conflict zone since the end of World War II. Even less is Romania a 'huge, remote forest land in eastern Europe', as the statement quoted above seems to imply.

Furthermore, while it has been a member of the European Union since 2007, Romania is not a member of the border-free Schengen area. The border between our country and its eastern neighbours, Ukraine and Moldova, is therefore an external, non-Schengen border of the EU subject to all controls implied by such a status.

Secondly, we believe that for the sake of truth and good journalism, the least Sky News and Mr Ramsay can do is to give Romania the right of response and follow up on their report with our point of view. The Romanian authorities would like to make the following points as to the content of the report:

- The weapons shown in the video are not military grade, but rather hunting weapons;

- The report does not provide any fact to support the idea that the weapons were indeed products of smuggling or their origin for that matter, apart from a short statement by one of the supposed gang members;
- It also does not provide any fact to support the main allegation of the report, i.e. the smugglers have some sort of permanent business connection with terrorists;
- Considering how crime rings behave, it is strange that real smugglers would agree to being filmed while they carry out their business.

Therefore, the reports fail to provide accurate, verified and complete information or facts in support of the allegations the author makes. Moreover – and more importantly – the author makes a direct connection between Romania and supply routes for terrorism that is not supported by anything in his investigation. By the very failure to ask anyone relevant in Romania for further information, comments or right of response, Mr Ramsay implies that no one in our country can or will stop the kind of crimes he is covering. As such, the reports create a negative image of Romania without the country being offered any chance to set things straight.

As a NATO member Romania is an active part of the fight against terrorism and a staunch partner for its Western allies, including the UK. Considering that we have had our fair share of lives lost in this fight, at least as a matter of courtesy Mr Ramsay should have asked the relevant institutions in Bucharest for some comment before airing the report.

Please note that we have tried several times to contact Mr Ramsay, but since he was unavailable, we had to resort to this form of communication instead for our right of response.

Yours sincerely,

Cosmin Onisii

Chargé d'affaires a.i.