

Iraqi crisis and the Islamic state



According to [French minister of defence Le Drian](#), Islamic state has changed its status from a terrorist group to a terrorist army with an ability to act as regular army while operate in city-area and commit terrorist attacks. In the beginning of July, U.S.-led coalition carried out [one of the most devastating air attacks against ISIS](#) since September 2014. Thirty jihadists died alongside with five civilians. The attack came after ISIS had released a video of beheading 25 Syrian soldiers in Palmyra's antique amphitheatre which is under UNESCO protection. The U.S. also started negotiating with northern Africa's states about [deployment of American drones in Libya](#) to fill the information gaps about what is really going on in the country after the ISIS infiltration. According to the latest sources, no state has agreed with it so far.

After a long delay, [the first four of 36 American fighters F-16 have arrived to Iraq](#). Iraqi pilots landed with the jets after a year of preparations and training in the U.S. [July also turned out as the dividing point for Turkey](#) which for the first time since launch of the air campaign against ISIS in August 2014 conducted airstrikes. It happened after ISIS bombing attack had killed 32 people in Turkish city close to Syrian borders. Turkey immediately arrested hundreds of suspects and [launched its own air attacks not only on ISIS, but also on PKK](#), Kurdistan Workers' Party, which is considered being a terrorist

organization. PKK's members are suspects in car bombing attack which killed two Turkish soldiers.



Ankara has also used the right to [summon NATO meeting according to the Article 4](#) of Washington Treaty which enables members to do this when they feel immediately threatened. Therefore, Brussels hosted the fourth summit of this kind in Alliance's history. General Secretary Jens Stoltenberg stated that whole Alliance unanimously ensured Turkey of its support for the air campaign. However, some of the top leaders expressed their worries about Turkish steps towards Kurds.

Additionally, [Turkey and the U.S. have agreed on further bilateral cooperation](#). Washington will be able to use Incirlik and Diyarbakir bases for its air campaign plus two more in case of emergency. The U.S. also sends a team of 50 troops to provide technical support. Moreover, both sides agreed on 90 kilometres-long no-fly zone between Syrian and southern Turkish borders which is also valid for Syrian warplanes. However, there is still an [unanswered question of Syrian rebels deployment](#). Only 60 of them have been trained so far which is deeply under expectations. Turkey would like to see them fighting against Syrian president Assad while Washington stands for ISIS as the primary target.

North America

The U.S. Army [plans to cut](#) about 40,000 troops in next two years as well as 17,000 civilian personnel. Therefore, current numbers of soldiers in active duty would fall from

490,000 to 450,000 troops. These cuts have been considered for a quite long time when already in 2014 former minister of defence Chuck Hagel suggested this as a consequence of two long and expensive wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Whilst some of the personnel cuts will be the part of so-called [attrition](#), the rest will be regularly dismissed. There is also a possibility that other 30,000 troops will lose their job if automatic budget cuts, known as [sequestration](#), will not be reversed.

U.S. neighbour and ally Canada has lately been dealing with struggles between its conservative government and opposition due to 'bungled' military procurement. Thus Harper's government [decided to release](#) a range of significant contract regarding Canadian Armed Forces. For example, it was announced that U.S.-based company *Mack Defense* had been rewarded to provide 1,500 standard military pattern trucks and related equipment. Another contract of new Sikorsky Cyclone helicopters whose delivery was eight years behind schedule, was also revealed. As the autumn general elections are coming, it is expected other contracts such as medium-range radars or communications gear for soldiers to be announced. On the contrary, there is no new information on e.g. supply ships, search and rescue aircraft or fast jets yet.

In the meantime, a group of scientists, engineers and celebrities has signed an open letter, where they [oppose development](#) of offensive weapons based on artificial intelligence. According to them, such weapons could have immeasurable consequences in hands of terrorists or dictators. Among those who signed the letter was e.g. Stephen Hawking, Steve Wozniak or Elon Musk. The signatories are aware of next inevitable step in humankind history, however, they would like to see

artificial intelligence as a part of technology which helps people instead of being a part of warfare system.

Continental Europe

British minister of exchequer George Osborne [surprisingly announced](#) that the UK is going to meet the 2% NATO defence budget target every year at least until 2020. [There was also revealed](#) 0.5% growth above inflation in military equipment budget that should bring extra more than £3 billion, or establishment of Common Security Fund of £1.5 billion for military and intelligence agencies. However, there is [one condition](#) - MoD must demonstrate its effectiveness in managing the budget which might be a catch in possible future cuts. The government has also been lately accused of false boosting of defence budget to meet the target as it should have include to it military operations as well as pensions. Still, British military takes this step as a good sign for a new defence review coming in few months that would be led by strategy, not budget.

In the budget context, Prime Minister [David Cameron called](#) for increased financing of Special Forces and UAVs as he spoke about fighting against the Islamic state. [He also stated](#) he would be willing to authorize airstrikes against Islamic extremists even in Syria, Libya or [elsewhere](#) if British citizens would face this threat imminently. Meanwhile [it emerged](#) that British pilots conducted airstrikes against ISIS in Syria which has been criticized by many politicians because it had not been authorized by the parliament. However, minister of defence Michael Fallon defended this step as a 'standard operational practise' when the pilots fall under coalition command.

Elsewhere in Europe, [Ukraine, Poland and Lithuania are about to establish joint brigade](#) based on 2014

agreement called *LITPOLUKRBRIG*. This joint force structure is designed in similar way to NATO and EU combat groups. The brigade will be mainly based on three battalions dislocated in mentioned countries with joint command Polish Lublin. Especially Ukraine will benefit from its participation because it will be forced to build its armed forces according to Western standards, bringing Ukraine closer to the West. Poland itself continues strengthening national defence. [Now former president Komorowski signed a legal act](#) which set defence expenditures at least at 2 % of GDP recommended by NATO. By this law, Warsaw also helps other East-European countries to get rid of Russian influence. In July, [Bulgaria announced that Poland would repair its 12 MiG-29 aircraft](#). This decision was immediately criticized by Moscow. According to Russia, Poland cannot repair these Russian-made jets because Polish companies does not have license to do so.

Staying in Eastern Europe, [Lithuanian and Latvian presidents announced](#) that theirs countries will cooperate on the field of weapons acquisitions in order to develop joint capabilities. Next major acquisition will be a new air defence system which should be bought by all Baltic countries. They could probably benefit from Polish special fund that was tailored to provide finances to Eastern-European countries defence acquisitions.

Finland, alarmed by current security situation, decided to boost its mobilization capability. Finland's conscript based armed forces have about 12,000 troops and can mobilize its numbers up to 230,000 within one to four weeks. Use of asymmetric warfare in Ukraine showed that time is crucial. Therefore, Finland will adjust legislative and [will create Rapid Response Units](#) which could be mobilized much faster than regular units.



After long negotiations, [settlement between France and Russia](#) over cancelled Mistral class ships deal was announced. France should pay 1.3 billion euro fee as a refund for Russian deal-related expenditures. Future of these two amphibious ships is not clear though. France will try to sell them to NATO countries or allies. For now, France must pay maintenance fees and some people suggest that sinking them would be the cheapest option.

[Czech Air Force is again guarding Iceland's sky](#). Czech task force ASICIPPN with help of Allied *Strategic Airlift Capability* program and Swedish contribution delivered more than 50 tons of logistic equipment to Island. Czech JAS-39 Gripen jets flew over 3,000 km from their home base to Iceland and exercised air refuelling capability during flight from Italian KC-767 air tanker. [Czech air policing mission is about to end on 25th August](#). The Czech Republic will also undergo a [general repair](#) for its W-3A Sokol helicopters by its Polish manufacturer. The whole modernization and repair for 8 helicopters will cost about one billion Czech crowns. Newly repaired aircraft should stay in service for other 7 years.

In the context of immigration crisis, Hungarian [government approved set new immigration laws and fortification of Hungarian border](#). Four meters high fence that should be completed in November this year, will be build alongside 175 km-long Hungary-Serbia border.

As it is not much discussed, Greek financial crisis has security impact as

well. [Since 2010 Greece has cut its defence expenditures by 46 %](#). However, Greek expenditures are still above NATO's 2% of GDP policy, although for example modernization of P-3 aircraft will be delayed due to these cuts. Current state of affairs is quite the opposite to the year 2008 when despite the beginning of financial crisis, Greece was still buying German submarines and French helicopters. Some experts also claim that possible 'Grexit' could be used by main actors such as Russia or China to divert Greece from the West and cause chaos at Balkan Peninsula.

North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

London hosted an annual meeting of NATO's marine commanders called [MARCOMET](#). Deputy Supreme Allied Commander in Europe general Bradshaw stressed out that Alliance should enforce its marine presence as a reaction to increasing Russian aggression. Supposedly, Moscow collects intelligence from NATO bases in the Baltic, Atlantic, Mediterranean and Black Sea.

In the meantime, Alliance prepares for the largest exercise in last two decades. [Trident Juncture 2015](#) will be focused on the fight against ISIS and will take place in Portugal, Spain, Italy, Atlantic ocean, Mediterranean sea, Canada, Norway, Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands. All 28 members will participate alongside with partners Sweden and Austria. The NGOs as well as significant international organizations such as EU or African Union will join the exercise. More than 1,800 soldiers from 18 states took part in 11 days-long American-Ukrainian [exercise Rapid Trident in western Ukraine](#). [They simulated](#) deactivation of improvised explosive devices, patrolling or convoy operations. [Russia accused the West of a clear](#)

[provocation](#), however, the U.S. claims that *Rapid Trident* was not about a reaction to the conflict in Ukraine. Experts noted that exercise may send Putin clear message to the speculations that Moscow is trying to use the five months cease fire in Ukraine for preparation of invasion. [Macedonia and Montenegro may become next Alliance's members](#) as both of them emphasized their will to try to avoid any kind of invasion. According to the countries' leaders, they feel threatened by current situation in Europe and the Middle East. NATO has previously stated that Macedonia already fulfilled the entry criteria, but Greece is still blocking its entrance due to Macedonia's name which is a historical part of Greece. However, Macedonia is prepared to enter under its new name FYROM, *Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*. Another adept, [Georgia, hosted Agile Spirit exercise](#) which was traditional only U.S.-Georgian matter although this year it fell under NATO. Georgia will also open in August a new NATO train centre. Tbilisi has been negotiating with Alliance since 2008, however, some of NATO members are still unsure about Georgia's future participation in Alliance as the current mood with Russia is on the lowest level since the Cold War.

Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe

Deputies of 57 countries of [OSCE voted for a resolution](#) which condemns Russian intervention in Ukraine and Crimea. The resolution came through despite Russian's delegation absence due to Finnish decision to reject entry visa to six Russian delegates. Finland claims that all of them are on the EU's non-wanted list banning travel to its member states. The declaration also

concerns disarmament or immigration crisis. The document can be found [here](#).

United Nation



After 12 long years world powers including the U.S., the UK, France, Russia, China and Germany (p5+1) [have reached a deal](#) with Iran on limiting its nuclear programme in return for lifting international economic sanctions. To fulfil the agreement, it would obliged Iran to remove two-thirds of installed centrifuges and store them under international supervision, get rid of 98% of its enriched uranium or permanently allow the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) its control activities 'where necessary' to prevent Iran acquiring a nuclear bomb. After that, sanctions will be lifted gradually except arms and missiles embargos that would be still in place for other 5 and 8 years and sanctions would be rapidly restored if the deal was violated.

Whereas U.S. president Barack Obama considers the deal to be supported by '99 % of world and nuclear experts' and a possible change of Iran's behaviour in the region, Republicans take the agreement as a possible trigger for nuclear arms race in the Middle East. As Republicans have majority in the Congress, it is expected they would not vote for the deal and Obama would use his veto which could be override only by two thirds in both chambers, to legally push it through. Neither some of U.S. allies and Iran's rivals in the regions are satisfied with this outcome. For

example Israel's prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu marked it as a 'historic mistake' and tends to ignore its principles, and Saudi Arabia is afraid of Iran's possible growth of economic and military power.

Iran itself which constantly claimed it has used nuclear energy in peaceful way only, takes the deal as a victory for its people, nevertheless, according to the highest authority in the country Ajatollah Khamenei it does not change anything in relations with the 'arrogant U.S.' and Iran would still protect its friends in the regions (Palestine, Syria etc.). On the other hand, without his 'blessing' there would be no deal to be sure and his approach could be seen as a move to comfort conservative opposition to the agreement.

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