

## Western countries and Ukrainian Conflict

Ceasefire established by [Minsk records was violated again](#). After incident which left 26 dead, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg stated that Russia bears a great deal of responsibility in whole conflict due to its involvement by supporting rebels in Eastern Ukraine.

## Iraqi Crisis and Islamic state

Iraqi prime minister [al-Abadi asked the international community for more help](#) in the fight against Islamic State. United States has already assured al-Abadi that Iraq would soon receive the first supply of anti-tank missiles. However, [Iraq complained about the Western sanctions against Russia](#) which unable Iraq to buy weapons from Kremlin. According to U.S. president Barack Obama, [Washington is still working on specification of the final plan](#) for the training of Iraqi armed forces. The absence of a precise plan is according to senator John McCain who is known to be a huge critique of current U.S. strategy in Iraq, totally alarming.



Despite the fact that [the U.S. has already begun the training of Syrian rebels](#), only 100-200 of them really started the training at military bases in Jordan and Turkey. Congress have so far approved \$500 million for training up to 5,000 rebels. Nevertheless, Americans are unsuccessful in finding

moderate rebels who would be also willing to fight against ISIS as their primary target. Turkey which is one of the participate states in training of Syrian rebels, has another view though. The primary target for Ankara is Syrian president Assad. Moreover, another friction surface between the U.S. and Turkey is the [support of Syrian Kurds](#) who represent a serious national threat to Turkey as Ankara has already stated that it would not let Kurds create any kind of their own autonomy state near Turkish borders. In the meantime, [ISIS posted a video threatening Balkans](#) and encouraging local Muslims to join jihadists and commit attacks in their states. Serbian security forces monitor the situation due to high number of Muslims in the country and minister of interior Stefanovic stated that Serbia was not frightened by radicals.

Aside fighting ISIS, the international community is struggling with [high number of refugees](#). According to the UN, existing situation in Iraq has displaced more than three million people since the beginning of the conflict in 2014. [UN has already requested Brussels for half a million dollars](#) to help deteriorating this humanitarian crisis. Without these financial resources for shelters, food and water, there is high probability of withdrawal of some international aid workers.

## North America

At the beginning of June, the U.S. Congress in voting 67-32 [passed a new bill](#) called *The Freedom Act* which reforms a government surveillance programme that was launched after 9/11. The main change is that under the new bill, telecommunications companies will still gather and store telephone records, however, they will be allowed to turn those data over to intelligence agencies only in response to a government request approved by

the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court. *The Freedom Act* represents [a breaking point](#) in the U.S. national security policy that has been under pressure since Edward Snowden, a contractor hired by the *National Security Agency - NSA*, revealed secrets about 'spying' on American citizens and several foreign politicians. The bill had already passed in the House of Representatives and symbolizes a great win for Democrats and especially president Barack Obama who wants to sign it as soon as possible.



In the meantime, the U.S. has stepped up its commitment to NATO's collective defence as its political representatives [decided to store heavy weaponry](#) in Baltic and Eastern European states. According to the U.S. defence minister Ash Carter, [it should include](#) mainly battle tanks, Bradley infantry fighting vehicles, self-propelled howitzers and some other heavy weapons for as many as 5,000 American troops. Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, Poland, Romania and Bulgaria [have agreed](#) on the terms of the U.S. mission and some of the troops and equipment, most of them already deployed in Europe, should be also allocated in Germany. [Carter said](#) that this initiative did not mean only support to military exercises in the region, but also had a significant potential in deterring Russian threat. It should also speed up rotations of the U.S. troops on exercises in Europe. Russian Federation condemned the

action and considers it as the most aggressive act that the U.S. has done since the end of the Cold War. [As a response](#), ministry of defence's general Yuri Yakubov said that Russia would undergo countermeasures as the U.S. troops would be stationed near Russian borders. It was followed by president [Vladimir Putin's announcement](#) that Russia will add 40 intercontinental ballistic missiles to its nuclear forces till the end of this year. Moreover, [the U.S. also wants to contribute](#) to the new NATO's rapid response force called *Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF)* with special operations forces, intelligence and other high-end military assets. It can be anticipated that the U.S. will deploy, apart from special forces and logistics, also its drones or manned aircraft for surveillance, reconnaissance and intelligence over Eastern European countries as a deterrence to potential Russian aggression for which the VJTF were established. [Defence minister Carter added](#) that the U.S. contribution could include airlift, infantry or naval firepower. Although most of these capabilities could be provided by troops already deployed in Europe, it might also mean temporary increase of the U.S. troops in a crisis situation. On the other hand, the U.S. wants to mainly provide high-end support to European land forces that form the bulk of the VJTF.

Not only in Eastern Europe the U.S. plans to deploy its troops. Spain agreed with [permanent stationing](#) of over 2,200 U.S. Marines, 500 civil staff and 26 aircraft at Morón de la Frontera, near Seville. These troops will come under the U.S. military command in Africa (AFRICOM) and their task will be to protect U.S. embassies in Africa, evacuate civilians in difficulty or intervene in conflicts or humanitarian crises. [The U.S. has already](#) a rapid response force of about 800 soldiers at Morón de la

Frontera called *Special-Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force* that were deployed temporarily in this area after the attack on a U.S. Embassy and CIA compound in Benghazi, eastern Libya, in 2012. The decision that changes the Marines' mission from temporary to permanent and prolongs it, amends a 1988 defence partnership between the two countries.



In terms of the U.S. domestic issues, [nine people were killed](#) by a white young man in Afro-American church in Charleston, South Carolina, as they were finishing studying Bible. From security footage, it was clear that the gunman, 21-year-old Dylann Roof, had entered the church an hour before he started shooting. The police described the attack at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church as a hate crime. Roof was arrested a day after and charged with multiple offenses, including an attempt of murder because three victims survived the attack. [According to Roof's friend](#), he had previously complained that 'blacks were taking over the world' and 'someone needed to do something about it for the white race'. This deadly incident opened the debate about racial issues that has surged the U.S. since killing several black men by white police officers. President Barack Obama [condemned the attack](#) and called again for more gun control in society. In the context of this event, there was a [discussion concerning Confederate flag](#) due to some photos in which Roof poses with it. The flag is considered to be a symbol of white supremacy and still hanged on the capitol building of

South Carolina. After protests from citizens and politicians, the flag was [finally removed](#).

Outside the U.S., [Canada also plans](#) to contribute to VJTF as Canadian prime minister Stephen Harper already announced [deploying military officers](#) to NATO's command headquarters in Szczecin, Poland, whose [capacity has been increased](#) due to Alliance's measures to boost its collective defence. Canadian defence minister Jason Kenney is willing to send [Canadian troops to Baltic states](#) if NATO decides to establish permanent bases there. These issues should have been discussed at the summit of NATO's defence ministers in Brussels later this month, there has been no outcome in this matter yet though. Canada has currently been engaged in the fighting against the so-called Islamic State in the Middle East where its F-18 Super Hornet fighters are deployed as well as military instructors from Canadian Special Forces to train local Kurdish forces. Canada has also about 200 soldiers stationed in Europe that participate in military exercises and there has been deployed [warship HMCS Fredericton](#), whose engagement had been kept as a secret till Harper's visit in Poland.

### Continental Europe

The United Kingdom decided to boost its commitment to NATO and announced [deploying other 500 troops to VJTF](#). According to British defence minister Michael Fallon, the UK should have 3,000 troops (out of 5,000 in total) as a part of so-called *spear-head forces* in 2017 when it becomes a leading country. [Later this month](#) the commitment strengthened as Fallon said that British troops will be deployed to VJTF in a size of battle group (circa 1,350 soldiers) after 2017 every year till 2021. The UK will also send its Typhoon aircraft to Baltic Air Policing mission again next year. This initiative comes in times when the UK

is criticized for its unwillingness to keep 2 % of GDP on defence spending set by NATO to each member country. Re-elected prime minister [David Cameron came under pressure](#) from U.S. president Barack Obama who urged him to meet the target. Cameron has not commit to maintain those two percent of GDP after British general elections in May which evoked a negative response at allies as well as British politicians and military.



For example, British minister of Foreign Affairs [Phillip Hammond agrees](#) with the U.S. defence minister Ash Carter that the UK could [weaken its international role](#) as a result of not meeting the target. The UK has undergone huge defence cuts in the light of the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) published in 2010 which aimed to apply austerity measures. However, since then the UK has been struggling with difficulties concerning not only financing, but also fulfilling required military capabilities. [Moreover](#), British HM Treasury's minister George Osborne announced other £500 million cuts in defence budget and [experts anticipate](#) that it is only the beginning of further cuts that would not allow to keep 2 % on defence spending. These issues should be resolved in [a new SDSR](#) that should be published at the end of this year along with so-called Spending Review which allocates finance to each government sector.

As the Ukrainian Crisis continues, Northern European and Baltic countries strengthen their defence. Norway is heading towards

[participation in NATO's missile defence system](#) although its precious involvement is not clear yet. Neutral Sweden and Finland are considering their future relations towards NATO while membership idea is still on the table. Finland and Denmark will soon chose their future fighter aircraft. Denmark decides between Eurofighter Typhoon, *Lockheed Martin's* F-35 and *Boeing's* F/A-18 Super Hornet. Winner will be announced in 2016. Finland considers all mentioned fighters above plus Rafale from French *Dassault* and Gripen from *Saab*. Baltic states continues to increase their defence spending. Estonia will meet NATO's 2 % of GDP requirements in 2015, while its neighbours will reach this level in 2020.

At the beginning of June, G7 summit took place in Germany. The main topic of the conference were economic sanctions against Russia. [The U.S., Germany and the UK agreed that the sanctions will remain](#) in place until Russia stops its involvement in Ukraine. In the fighting ISIS topic, [Iraqi prime minister al-Abadi criticized nations for the lack of will to defeat ISIS](#) and current airstrikes effectiveness. The summit also focused on the environment. [For the first time in G7 history all nations agreed on common approach](#). All member nations should decrease their greenhouse gas emissions by 70 %. [Another security event, GLOBSEC took place in Slovakia](#). British Prime Minister David Cameron stated there that Europe is endangered mainly by failed states and criminal groups. The Ukrainian crisis and campaign against ISIS were discussed as well.

In the meantime, Germany announced a winner of its new air defence system tender. Joint project [MEADS won against a new generation Patriot](#) system from *Raytheon*. MEADS won mainly due to Germany's involvement (25 %) in development of this project. German government also approved

[several arms export deals to Persian Gulf region](#). All shipments are delivered under conditions that arms cannot be used for human rights violation activities. This is also the reason for continuous ban against G36 firearms deal to Saudi Arabia. German arms exports as whole is, however, in decline. After implementation of strict export criterias, [German arms deals lowered from more than 8 billion euro in 2013 to 6.5 billion euro in 2014](#). The German opposition is still against current export criteria and calls for even more severe rules.



[Another terrorist attack took place in France](#). Muslim extremist Y. Salhi drove his truck to *Air products* gas plant in order to cause explosion and poison gas leak. His plan failed and he was caught when he tried to leak the gas manually. The flag of the Islamic State and chopped off head were later discovered near the gas plant. [Salhi had been under intelligence agencies surveillance](#) since 2006 for his contacts with radical Salafists.

In the context of France, [French air force still continues in A-400 program](#). After recent crash in Spain, French air force conducted some flight tests in harsh African environment in order to discover hidden flaws. Tests were successful and French air force decided to continue with the next step which would be parachute drop tests. [French and British companies laso agreed to develop system against small UAVs](#) (under 25kg). This system

should have the ability to track UAVs flight path retrospectively in order to ease prosecution of those who were responsible in drone misuse. Another defence project proceeded to its next step. [Delayed Polish Leopard tanks modernization program](#) should know its contractor at the end of this year. Poland will upgrade all of its Leopard tanks in version 2A4. This step is a part of many actions that aim to increase Polish defence capabilities.

## North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NATO underwent several exercises during June. One of them, [Capable Logistician 2015](#), focused on a wide range of possibilities how to lower costs in interoperability. Alliance tested in Hungary more than 50 kinds of equipment concerning renewable energy. The aim was to come up with efficient technology that would reduce the amount of used fuel during deployments of soldiers in the field. Another exercise, [BALTOPS 2015](#), took place in the Baltic Sea and included 14 NATO members altogether with partners such as Finland, Sweden and Georgia. BALTOPS exists since 1971 and is targeted on the ability to defend Baltic states as well as sweeping sea from Cold War mines.



At the beginning of June, San Diego factory presented [the first out of five Alliance's unmanned aircraft called Global Hawk Black 40](#) which are a part of the *Alliance Ground Surveillance Programme (AGS)*. It enables NATO to

have permanent control over situation in the battlefield both for long and short distance operations. AGS system which is currently requested by 15 members will achieve full operational status by the end of 2017. The full report is available [here](#).

Very High Readiness Joint Task Force, also called spear-head forces, were deployed for the first time during exercise [Noble Jump](#) in Zagan, Poland. More than 2,100 soldiers from nine member states were involved during a period of ten days. The aim was to test the readiness of the forces within the war simulation as well as reassure the allies.

[Alliance is also preparing a plan for returning to Iraq](#). The announcement is expected very soon and NATO will provide advisory to Iraqi government about reforms of its security forces. [NATO had operated in Iraq since 2004](#) till its withdrawal in 2011 and trained more than 5,000 Iraqi troops and provided about 2,000 training courses. However, Iraqi units were still unable to face ISIS' threat. NATO withdrawn from Iraq due to inability to achieve agreement on the legal status of Alliance's soldiers.

At the end of June, [NATO's ministers of defence met in Brussels](#) where they agreed on enlargement of the NATO's Response Forces from 13,000 troops to 40,000 alongside with tools to speed up the decision-making process in time of crisis. Among these decisions, there are about to be new bases in Bulgaria, Baltic region, Poland and Romania that will plan exercises and supervise empowering of local units and common logistician headquarters for faster moves of troops. Ministers also expressed their [support to Ukraine](#) and [a new, mostly civilian mission in Afghanistan](#).

There were also changes in NATO's leadership. Czech general Petr Pavel [took over a post of the chairman of NATO's Military Committee](#) from general Knud Bartels after three and a

half years. Pavel became the first chairman coming from former Warsaw Pact states.



Last but not the least, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg expressed worries over [Moscow's statements about increasing the number of their nuclear missiles](#). According to him, Kremlin undergoes provocative activities. However, [Russia justifies its behaviour by only a reaction](#) to the transfer of Western heavy military equipment to Eastern Europe and its borders. The U.S. stated that [Russia contravenes the treaty about middle-range nuclear missiles \(INF\)](#) by acquisition of 500-5,500 km range missiles. Pentagon will also modernize its nuclear arsenal during 2012-2035 with \$18 million in each year though.

## European Union

According to members of European Parliament, it is the right time to [re-evaluate European relationship with Russia](#) which has been violated by contravening of democracy principles, fundamental values and international law by annexation of Crimea. There were 494 of MEPs in favour of this new resolution, 135 MEPs voted against it. The EU is determined to fight against Russian information and propaganda war. MEPs emphasized that cooperation with Russia may be restored again, but only after Russia will respect Ukrainian territorial integrity including Crimea and will implement Minsk's records.

At their annual meeting, EU's ministers of Foreign Affairs agreed on

[extending economic sanctions](#) against Russia until the end of January 2016. Their goal is to force Russia to fulfil Minsk records which requires ceasefire in Eastern Ukraine and set year-end deadline for Kiev to re-gain its sovereignty in the area. These [sanctions](#) were imposed on Russia in July 2014 in the wake of Russian annexation of Crimea and destabilization of Eastern Ukraine. According to Russian ministry of Foreign Affairs, the decision is a triumph for the "Russophobe" lobby in the EU a warned about losing thousands of jobs for European citizens due to the sanctions. Moreover, Russian prime minister Dmitri Medvedev ask for extending a presidential decree which authorized food import ban from the EU.



[In the meantime](#), the EU has agreed on launching an operation against people-smugglers in the Mediterranean which should be another step in successful resolving the immigration crisis at the EU's Southern border. Warships from the UK, Italy and Germany should participate in this mission as well as Italian submarines and Reaper drones. Italian navy base in Augusta, Sicily, is supposed to be the logistic centre. [Nevertheless](#), one week later it was revealed that the operation will be rather for gathering intelligence and detecting smugglers networks than purely military one. Due to focus on Libyan coast which is the main location for boarding on smugglers' ships, the mission has to be authorised by the UN Security Council as a resolution that seems to be based on Libya's own

decision. However, the country has currently been ruled by two different governments and the recognized one is willing to bomb any ship intervening its territorial waters because 'Libyan sovereignty and territorial waters and airspace are a red line'. Ultimately, the current purpose of the operation does not change much since there have already been warships in the Mediterranean helping to save immigrants sailing to the Italian or Greek Coast.

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