

## Iraqi crisis and the Islamic state



After months of waiting, [the United States finally launched](#) a training programme for Syrian rebels. The first 90 U.S. soldiers are currently deployed at the Jordanian base. More than 3 750 Syrians have voluntarily enrolled in the programme and the U.S. and Turkey aim to train up to 15 000 rebels at the military bases in Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Qatar. The Syrians have supposedly got paid for the attendance in the programme. Furthermore, the U.S. and Turkey agreed [to provide air support](#) for the rebels during fighting. However, it is not clear when the air support begins. On the other hand, the two countries have not agreed on [the aim of the deployment](#). Turkey claims that Assad is the main target whereas the U.S. sees Islamic state's jihadists as the main enemy. In the meantime, the United States are facing [accusations of killing innocent civilians](#) through the air campaign against the Islamic state. The internal military investigation has proved 132 dead non-combatants alongside with 2 000 members of ISIS. The U.S. Army claims that no innocent people are known to be killed since the targets are deeply checked before each strike. President of the autonomous Kurdish area is willing to accept [delivery of U.S. weapons](#) under the U.S. conditions. Although Iraqi president Abadi stressed out that the U.S. may support separatist intentions, the United States assured Abadi that Iraq will keep an eye on each contract.

Moreover, the U.S. will supply Iraq with up to [1 000 anti-tank missiles](#) in the fight against ISIS to prevent suicide car bombings. There has also been [offered help in the fight against ISIS](#) from Russian president Vladimir Putin during the visit of Iraqi prime minister in Russia. However, ISIS took over the largest city of Iraqi province Anbar, [Ramadi](#). Iraqi forces were unable to react to the attack which was subsequently criticized by the U.S. emphasising that Iraqis had already given up their fight. ISIS also attacked Syrian historical city Palmyra – [UNESCO has already called both sides to stop fighting](#) and save the world's cultural heritage. NATO Secretary General [Jens Stoltenberg warned of the migration threat](#) coming from Middle East and North Africa which may enable jihadists to enter the European continent. During his visit at the meeting of European ministers of defence and foreign affairs he stated that the EU had not yet asked Alliance for help in the issue of immigration but emphasised that NATO was ready to contribute anytime.

## North America

Canadian government officials announced that in June Canada will start creating [a short list of bidders](#) for the *Canadian Surface Combatant* programme (CSC). Companies from both Europe and North America will compete in 24 billion USD worth acquisition programme. CSC is divided into two stages. The first-stage winner will be announced in 2017 and its aim will be to build 15 ships. The second-stage winner will provide armament and combat systems installation. [Canada also plans life extension](#) for its Victoria-class submarines (former British Upholder-class). After the planned modernization ships would operate at least till 2033 and perhaps even beyond, depending on selection of upgrades and technologies. This five

extension initiative will cost from 1.2 to 2.5 billion USD.



In the context of the United States, U.S. president [Barack Obama hosted summit at Camp David](#) with six nations from the Gulf Cooperation Council. The main purpose of this meeting was to reassure Gulf allies about the U.S. will to defend them despite the U.S. rejection of a defence treaty that had been brought on the table before the summit. Obama vowed to continuous military aid and also promised help with establishing [regional joint anti-missile air defence](#) that should be aimed mainly against Iran. In the meantime, the infamous Patriotic act that was passed after 9/11 enabling data surveillance, [expired](#). Its extension was blocked by Republican senator Rand Paul. The U.S. is currently working on a similar act with a few changes. One of the discussed points is the fact that under the new act, communication companies would store the data instead of the U.S. government.

## Continental Europe

The enormous immigrant wave forced the EU to make a stand. As a result, EU member states should [establish a naval mission](#) whose goal would be a search for smugglers' boats, their identification and destruction. However, the necessary condition for this mission is an UN mandate. EU also wants to implement an immigrant distribution mechanism which would

help distribute over 600 000 refugees from last year among the 28 states. However, distribution quotas are dividing the EU. Many states including the United Kingdom, Spain of the Czech Republic. Last month, [France offered 785 million euro to Russia](#) as a compensation for two undelivered Mistral-class amphibious assault ships. According to Russian president Putin, Russia will not demand penalties, they simply just want their money back. He also added that Russia had ordered ships in order to help French shipyards.



In the meantime, [The Czech Republic hosted Gripen-users group exercise called Lion Effort](#). Swedish, Hungarian and Czech Gripen fighter jets alongside with Thai observers underwent Composite Air Operations Exercise focusing on cooperation and air combat scenarios. Polish F-16's and German Typhoons also took part in *Lion Effort* lifting off from their home bases. Exercise was unfortunately marked by a landing accident of Hungarian Gripen which became the first [foreign Gripen user crash](#). [Czech Gripens will also take part in Island Air Policing](#) mission as a substitute for Canadian pilots are operationally busy by fighting against the Islamic State. The Czech Republic will send five fighter jets with 70 personnel who will participate on the Island air-defence from 20 July to 20 August. According to Czech defence minister Martin Stropnický this step is a valuable Czech contribution to NATO. Another military exercise took place in Estonia. *Steadfast Javelin* was the biggest

[military exercise in Estonian history](#) and the Baltic region. About 13 000 soldiers [from the whole 26 000 troops army](#) alongside with 7 000 reservists exercised homeland defence against a fictional east-located enemy.



[Poland, the Netherlands and Norway plans to make a joint acquisition](#) of Airbus A330 MRTT tankers. The acquisition programme would be under the European OCCAR Agency's supervision. An agreement is about to be signed at the beginning of 2016 and aircraft would start operating in mid-2020s. Expenditures will be divided between participating states. Although the programme was established by three countries, it will be still open for another allied partners. Last but not the least, [Italy issued the final version of its defence budget](#) confirming its declining tendency. Total defence spending is 13.19 billion euro including 2.5 billion from Ministry of Industry regarding new procurements. This new budget also confirms [Italian will to continue in the Joint Strike Fighter programme](#) by counting with 38 F-35 fighter jets delivered by 2020.

## North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

[NATO's ministers of foreign affairs](#) met in Turkish city Antalya to discuss current security issues in the world. Turkey stressed out that NATO is focusing on the situation in the Eastern Europe more than it is required. Moreover the country ponders whether its current NATO membership still pays off. [In the context of Ukraine](#), NATO reaffirmed

its full support to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and called Russia to keep ceasefire and enable OSCE observers to enter the area. Alliance also stressed [the need to adapt the mix](#) of conventional tactics alongside with divisive campaign and cyber-warfare to counter the Russian so-called 'hybrid war'. The last but not the least, the ministers agreed on maintaining NATO's presence in Afghanistan after the end of the current operation *Resolute Support*. The next mission should be led by civilians but should also contain a military component to continue in advising and helping Afghan authorities in security issues.



At the beginning of May, NATO launched its [exercise called Baltic Fortress](#) at the Lithuanian coast whose goal was to improve the interoperability between allies. More than 20 vessels participated in this exercise. A dozen surface vessels and four submarine took also part in [anti-submarine warfare exercise](#) called *Dynamic Mongoose* that was launched off Norwegian coast. The main focus of this exercise was on detecting and defending against submarines which were trying to approach and target the ships undetected. Moreover, around a hundred fighter jets took part in drills in Norway, Sweden and Finland to boost the cooperation among members in the Arctic area as a reaction to growing numbers of Russian fighters flying close to the NATO's airspace. But in the wake of these drills, Russia immediately launched an [unexpected exercise](#) in its

## Euro-Atlantic Area

Arctic territory. Twelve thousands soldiers and 250 aircraft trained simulated air attacks. Therefore, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg demands Russia to be [more transparent about its exercises](#) to avoid possible misunderstanding. Furthermore, [the Alliance is worried](#) about Russian nuclear rhetoric and its plans to deploy nuclear weapons to Kaliningrad and Crimea. [Baltic states has already asked NATO](#) to deploy thousands of units to the area as a counter-force to Russia and they discuss their common air-defence system.

## European Union

The enormous number of immigrants from Middle East and North Africa coming to Europe forced the EU to take some [countermeasures in the form of quotas](#) of accepting a certain number of immigrants for each member state. However, the plan to split the burden among all member states has become immediately criticized mainly from the United Kingdom, Ireland, Denmark, Hungary and the Czech Republic. These states aim to create blocking votes despite the fact that their efforts have very little chance to succeed as Italy, France and Germany are all able to push the proposal through the voting system.

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