

Euro-Atlantic Area

Fighting the ISIS in Iraq and Syria

At the beginning of December, Great Britain joined a narrow group of states which bomb so-called Islamic State. So far, the air strikes were conducted only by the United States, Russia and France. [British government approved sending four air fighters Tornado](#) out of Cyprus base to bomb strategic targets used by jihadists. According to the news, Britons succeeded in hitting oil fields under ISIS control in Eastern Syria.

In the shadow of Paris attacks, also the [German government approved the help](#) to the international coalition in the Middle East. The German army is sending six air fighters Tornado intended for surveillance purposes only altogether with 1,200 soldiers. Thus, Germany makes it clear that it does not intend to participate in air strikes. Moreover, the government is sending a frigate to protect French aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle and air refuelling aircraft. According to the latest polls, 58% of Germans support military operations against ISIS, whereas 37% of inhabitants are against. The deployment of German troops was approved even though 63% of Germans think the likelihood of a terrorist attack on Berlin is very high. The most active player in the Middle East fighting against ISIS is still the United States even though the war with jihadists cost [11 mil. dollars per day](#). Americans sent their [aircraft carrier Harry S. Truman to the Gulf](#) to join already operating Charles de Gaulle. Further, [USA offered Iraq helicopters as well as military advisers](#), however the Iraqi state still ponders whether to

accept the help or not. The Iraqi army rather celebrates recapturing of Ramadi city, which belongs to one of ISIS main stations. According to Iraqi representatives, jihadists suffered a great defeat and Iraqis believe that [2016 is a year of great and final victory](#) over this radical organization. Thus, Iraqi forces have focused now on Mosul in Northern Iraq.



The US Aircraft Carrier Harry S. Truman (Source: [Wikimedia](#))

So far, ISIS successfully attracted [31,000 people from all over the world](#) from more than 80 countries; the number has more than doubled since summer 2014. Five thousand foreign fighters came from Europe – out of them 3,700 from France, Germany, Belgium and Great Britain. From the former Soviet Union, about 4,700 recruited people have fled.

Alongside with Russian support, [United Nations strengthen the sanctions](#) against those who do business with ISIS. The UN requires that states should describe which steps they are taking to prevent terrorist organizations from making any money, including international oil trade. Moreover, another round of negotiations about the Syrian government's future will be held at the end of January in Geneva. [The current UN resolution includes:](#)

- Calls for a ceasefire and formal talks on a political transition to start in January
- Groups and individuals designated as "terrorists" will be excluded
- "Offensive and defensive actions" against terrorists - a reference to air strikes by Russia and the US-led coalition against Islamic State - to continue
- UN chief Ban Ki-moon to report by 18 January on how to monitor a ceasefire
- Political transition should be Syrian-led, and led to the establishment of "credible, inclusive and non-sectarian governance" within six months
- "Free and fair elections" under UN supervision to be held within 18 months

Syrian and Chinese governments have so far agreed on three principles: peaceful solution, Syrian people will decide about Syria's future, UN will have the key role during negotiations.

North America**USA will allow women to serve in combat units**

Secretary of Defense A. Carter announced that women will have the same opportunities as men. From this moment they can apply for combat roles and even become members of special forces. President Obama welcomed this step and stated that this "historic moment" will make US armed forces even stronger. Not everyone is so cheerful about gender equality. The United States Marine Corps (USMC) called for equality exceptions in some combat roles and specialized

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positions. These exceptions were even supported by GEN. J. Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, but the Pentagon refused.



Illustration photo: US Navy Seal special forces (Source: [Wikimedia](#))

US joint air exercises with the European partners

Trilateral air exercise took place in the United States of America. The most advanced jet fighters from USA, Great Britain and France have trained in air combat side by side. F-22 Raptors with British Typhoons and French Rafales fought against OPFOR squadrons with F-15E Strike Eagles and T-38 Talons. According to British Air Chief Sir A. Pulford, this exercise was significant mainly as a step to renew air-to-air fight capabilities due to more than 10 years of focus on anti-terror operations. The second part of this exercise was aimed towards fighting in areas with modern air defense systems equipped with electronic warfare capabilities.

Continental Europe

SIPRI annual report on arms deliveries

According to SIPRI's annual report, global arms sales dropped by 1.5% to 405 billion USD. The decrease is most visible on the profits of western companies. On the other hand, Russian manufacturers almost doubled their sales. The biggest defense company is Lockheed

Martin, second is Boeing and the third place belongs to BAE Systems. Chinese companies were not taken into account in the research due to not enough available solid data. Two of them (Norinco and AVIC) would surely take place in the top 10 producers.

The Paris Conference on Climate Change

Paris hosted the OSN global change summit. Representatives of 195 countries made a historical breakthrough. They signed an accord in which they agreed to cut greenhouse gases by half and by this reduce global warming. The plan is to keep global warming on a 2°C level, and some countries voluntarily took the challenge of lowering this level to 1.5°C. This accord is called "historical" due to such a broader agreement between all parties, even USA and China, the biggest air polluters.



The Heads of State and Government at the opening of the COP21 (Source: [Wikimedia](#))

Acquisition plans of Germany and Poland

The Bundestag approved a plan for 131 Boxer vehicle deliveries. Germany will acquire Boxers in a modernized V2 version, which provides better protection. The whole contract is worth 654 million EUR and deliveries are planned in the years 2017-2021. Germany is also evaluating the possibility of new fighter development which would replace German

Tornado's. Tornados are in German service since 1981 and their service life should end by 2025. Whether new aircraft will be manned or unmanned is not sure, the project will be first discussed with European partners.

Poland plans modernization of all 128 Leopard 2A4 tanks to the new Leopard 2PL standard. Modernization will be made mainly by Polish defense companies with help from Leopard 2 manufacturer, German Rheinmetall as a strategic partner. The first Leopard 2PL should be delivered in 2018 and deliveries will continue by 2020. Poland also plans eventual modernization of its Leopard 2A5 tanks in 2021. The country is also planning to strengthen its artillery capabilities. In the program RAK is planned to acquire self-propelled mortars and in the program HOMAR long range rocket artillery. Both programs are unfortunately delayed. In the HOMAR case it was not picked as a winner and in the RAK case it was not signed, but the first deliveries are expected in 2017.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization

Meeting of Alliance's Foreign Ministers

During [the meeting of NATO's Foreign Ministers](#) at the beginning of December in Brussels, the Ministers were touching upon e.g. the Afghanistan topic. They decided to prolong the training mission for local armed forces until 2020. Units operate in cities like Kabul or Kandahar. The turn back to the previous operations was not mentioned at all.

[The topic of Ukraine](#) was also raised during this two-week meeting –

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Ministers confirmed continuation of political and practical support to Ukraine altogether with peace and diplomatic solution of Eastern Ukraine's conflict. General Secretary, Jens Stoltenberg, re-emphasized the need to follow Minsk agreement.

Last but not least, [the Islamic state issue was also on agenda](#) in Brussels – the talks about preventive measures took after Paris attacks and Wien peace negotiations about Syrian future. Stoltenberg pointed out that the main focus is now around Turkey, which, as an Alliance's member, is in direct touch with the conflict. He also stressed, that Alliance helps partners in Middle East and Africa to develop their defence capabilities, and he mentioned the example of Jordan and Iraq. The activities include e.g. the training against explosive devices, countering cyber terrorism and reform of the security sector. Further, NATO cooperates with Tunisia on fighting against terrorism including the training of Special Forces.

[The invitation of Montenegro representatives](#) to the entering interviews for being 29th NATO member was also unanimously agreed by Ministers.

NATO will strengthen Turkish air defence

Alliance has agreed to send aircrafts and ships to [enforce Turkish air space on Syrian borders](#). Diplomats added that accepted package aims primarily to prevent another shot down of Russian planes. Mentioned package should include NATO aircrafts with AWACS system and patrolling ships to increase marine presence. These ships will be provided by Germany and

Denmark, which are currently undergoing exercise in Mediterranean. According to Stoltenberg, the mission [has been prepared for more than 10 months](#), long before the incident with Russia occurred.

The First Flight of Alliance's UAV

The first out of five unmanned aerial vehicles NATO Global Hawk underwent [the premiere of its start](#) in the first half of December. The UAV was in the air for 2,5 hours. After AWACS purchase from 80s, this is another joint Alliance purchase. The UAV should provide better overview over the battlefield and will be guided from Sigonelle Italian base. Another step will be [to implement advanced radar and sensor](#), which enable to detect and track objects on the battlefield.



Illustration photo: Alliance Global Hawk unmanned aircraft
(Source: [NATO](#))

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