

OBSERVATORY ON EUROPEAN DEFENCE

JANUARY 2016

In the spotlight

7 January

Spain and Belgium take over NATO's Baltic Air Policing Mission

The 40th rotation of NATO's Baltic Air Policing mission took place in January in Lithuania and Estonia. The responsibility for the mission was transferred from Hungary and Germany to Spain and Belgium. Within the framework of the mission, Allies take up air patrols for a four-month rotation on a 24/7 basis. Spain is leading the Baltic Air Policing Mission for the first four months of 2016 with four Eurofighter jets based at Šiauliai, Lithuania, while four Belgian F-16 fighter jets are based at the Ämari airbase, in Estonia. The air policing mission has taken place in the Baltic skies since 2004, when Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania joined the Alliance.

7 January

EU appoints new head of Ukraine mission

The Council appointed Kęstutis Lančinskas as head of the European Union Advisory Mission (EUAM) Ukraine. Lančinskas, who served as a senior Lithuanian police officer, replaced Kalman Mizsei on 1 February. The mission is one of the key EU's tools to provide the Ukrainian authorities with enhanced support following the Maidan uprising in December 2013. In particular, EUAM was launched with the aim to strengthen and support reforms in state agencies such as police, law enforcement agencies and the overall judiciary, particularly the prosecutor's office. This process has the objective to restore the trust of the Ukrainian people in their civilian security services, which have been accused of corruption and malpractices.

7 January

EU to invest 1 billion euros in regions along its external borders

The European Commission has adopted a series of cross-border cooperation programs, for a total of 1 billion euros, supporting social and economic development in the regions on both sides of the EU's external borders. This type of cross border cooperation is an important element of the EU policy towards its neighbors. The aim of the initiative is to prioritise projects supporting sustainable development along the EU's external borders, thus reducing differences in living standards and addressing common challenges across the borders. The participating countries have selected up to four priorities, which include topics such as SME development, culture, environment and climate change, fight against poverty, education and research, energy, accessibility, border management for each of the programs. The new package will finance projects in 30 countries: 16 EU members, Norway Turkey, plus 12 neighbouring countries (Armenia, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Belarus, Ukraine and Russia in the east; Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Tunisia).

16 January

Iran: Council lifts all nuclear-related sanctions

The Council lifted all nuclear-related and financial EU sanctions against Iran. This decision follows verification on 16 January by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that Iran has implemented the agreed nuclear-related measures as set out in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). On 14 July 2015, China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States, together with HR/VP Federica Mogherini, agreed to the JCPOA, which certifies the exclusive peaceful nature of the Iranian nuclear program. The agreement lifts all UN

Security Council sanctions, as well as EU and US ones related to Iran's nuclear program following an agreed sequence of actions.

22 January

IAEA and EU make progress on nuclear cooperation

The talks on 21-22 January 2016 in Vienna between International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and EU high officials provided the possibility to exchange views on enhancing collaboration in nuclear safety, security, safeguards, sustainable development and nuclear energy research and innovation. HR/VP Federica Mogherini reiterated EU willingness to support IAEA's initiatives in relation to the implementation of JCPOA. EU and IAEA made progress to strengthen their cooperation concerning a wide range of nuclear-related activities. The next senior officials meeting will take place in Brussels in early 2017.

28 January

Tunisia: Council extends asset freeze of former president by one year

The Council extended until 31 January 2017 asset freezing of 48 persons, who are accused of the Tunisian state funds' embezzlement. Initially introduced in January 2011, and later extended year by year, these measures are set against former president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, his wife and other 46 persons.

28 January

Secretary General Stoltenberg presents NATO's Annual Report

During the presentation of the Annual Report, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg affirmed that cuts in defence sectors among European allies and Canada have stopped after years of considerable reductions. Stoltenberg emphasised that more needs to be done to increase defence investments in the face of major security challenges. NATO has "visibly increased" its presence in the eastern part, while in the South has "agreed to increase the presence of AWACS early warning aircraft over Turkey" said Stoltenberg. He pointed out that NATO has tripled the size of its Response Force, including the establishment of a Spearhead Force. These measures are part of the most significant reinforcement of NATO's collective defence in the last years.

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