

OBSERVATORY ON EUROPEAN DEFENCE

FEBRUARY 2016

In the spotlight

10 February

NATO-EU cyber defence cooperation

NATO and the European Union face common challenges to protect their networks from the growing threat of cyber-attacks. For this reason, the two organisations have signed an agreement aiming at strengthening the cooperation between the NATO Computer Incident Response Capability (NCIRC) and the Computer Emergency Response Team of the European Union (CERT-EU). The agreement, which foresees information exchange and the sharing of best practices, shows some continuity in cyber defence activities between the two entities, as the EU Staff has already participated in NATO's annual "Cyber Coalition" exercises.

4 February

EU: more than 3 billion euros to Syrian refugees

The EU committed to allocate more than 3 billion euros to support Syrian people and countries hosting refugees at the London conference. These funds come on top of the 5 billion euros already allocated so far and tripled the financial resources offered at the previous donor conference in Kuwait, when the EU had allocated 1.1 billion euros. In London, the EU underlined its willingness to keep supporting the United Nations and those countries, including Jordan and Lebanon, hosting the highest number of refugees in relation to their populations.

10 February

NATO boosts its defence and deterrence posture

NATO Defence Ministers agreed on the presence of an "advanced force" on the eastern front. The force will rotate and will enhance its readiness with a program of exercises. Integrated logistics and infrastructure will facilitate the force prepositioning. The composition and the

dimension of NATO's presence will be further discussed in spring. Concerning the Alliance continuous adaptation to the changing security environment, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has underlined the importance of reinforcing cyber defence and of a robust response to hybrid warfare's threat. Stoltenberg has also remarked that new decisions concerning NATO's presence on the Eastern flank will be discussed at the July Warsaw summit.

15 February

Montenegro begins Accession Talks with NATO

Montenegro made an important step on its road towards NATO membership: two days of Accession Talks were held in Brussels to address details, including political, military and legal aspects, of its inclusion within the Alliance. The next step for the Balkan country will be to sign the Accession Protocol, allowing Montenegro to attend NATO meetings as an invitee. After the ratification of the protocol by all member states' parliaments, Montenegro will become the 29th member of the Alliance.

15 February

Zimbabwe: EU extends sanctions by one year

The Council has extended restrictive measures against President Robert Mugabe, his wife and Zimbabwe Defence Industries (ZDI) by one year. The arms embargo will also remain in place. Restrictive measures were first introduced in February 2002, when the Council expressed its concerns on violations of human rights perpetrated by the government.

15 February

Libya: EUBAM mission extended and amended

The EU Council extended the European Union Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM) in Libya for further six months. The Council also brought some

substantial changes to the mission, adding to its organisation a civilian component which will closely work with UNSMIL (UN Support Mission in Libya), with the Libyan authorities and others relevant actors in the security sector. Established in May 2013, EUBAM mission counts on an international staff of 16 people and has a budget of 4,475 million euros.

25 February

EU amends sanctions against Belarus

The Council has lifted sanctions against 170 people and 3 Belarusian companies, while extending measures against four individuals connected to the disappearance of two representatives of the Ukrainian opposition, a businessperson and a journalist. Restrictions include assets freeze and travel ban. In October 2015, the Council had already suspended sanctions against those people and companies until February 2016. Its decision is a response to the release of all Belarusian political prisoners in August 2015, which led to improved EU-Belarus relations. These further thawed after no signs of violence were reported during the elections in October 2015. The arms embargo remains however in place.

27 February

NATO conducts drills in the Aegean Sea

The Standing NATO Maritime Group Two (SNMG2) is patrolling the area between Turkey and Greece in order to fight illegal trafficking and illegal migration, as mandated by the North Atlantic Council. The Alliance ships are conducting reconnaissance, monitoring, surveillance and training activities. NATO Defence Ministers agreed on their deployment on 11 February, following a request by Germany, Greece and Turkey.

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