

OBSERVATORY ON **IA** EUROPEAN DEFENCE

JUNE 2015

In the spotlight

24 June

NATO strengthens its Response Force

The Defence Ministers of NATO countries decided to strengthen the collective defence capacities of the Alliance. The adopted package of measures concerns the strengthening of the NATO Response Force (NRF), and in particular a large increase in air, sea and land forces reaching more than 40,000 units – a significant increase considering the previous 13,000. The Ministers also adopted a number of measures to speed up the decision-making process and defined the details regarding the new six headquarters established in Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania. Each of them will consist of 40 people and will play a key role, especially during exercises and for the supply of materials and personnel.

5 June

First NATO drone warms up

The first of five Remotely Piloted Aircrafts (RPA) owned by NATO has warmed up and took off from San Diego. The purchase of the Global Hawk Block 40 drone, which is part of the Alliance Ground Surveillance (AGS) programme, will allow Allies to patrol large areas, even from high altitude and with long endurance. Fifteen countries (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Norway, Poland, Slovakia, Romania, Slovenia and the United States) bought the aircraft, which will reach its initial operational capability by the end of 2017. Global Hawks will be controlled by the main operating centre in Sigonella, Italy.

5 June

Ukraine, the Council extends the assets freezing

Within the context of EU sanctions related to the misappropriation of Ukrainian State funds, the Council of the EU extended the asset-freeze for 3 out of 4 people targeted by restrictive measures expiring on June 6. The extension consists of 9 additional months for 2 people and 4 additional months for the third one. The son of the former President Viktor Yanukovich has been instead removed from the list of persons affected by restrictive measures. This decision has been taken in light of ongoing judicial proceedings with regard to these people in Ukraine. The European restrictive measures are now targeting 17 people.

9 June

Spearhead Force deploys for first time

The NATO new Rapid Reaction Force (Very High Readiness Joint Task Force, VJTF) is being deployed for the first time during the exercise Noble Jump in Zagan, Poland. The exercise is the first opportunity for rapid response units to conduct tactical manoeuvres. It involved – from 9 to 19 June – more than 2,100 troops from nine NATO countries (Belgium, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland and the United States). The exercise allowed the military staff to identify strengths and weaknesses already in the early stages of the development process. Further and more complex exercises will be carried out during the whole 2015 and 2016.

16 June

EUTM Mali: new commander appointed

Brigadier General Franz Xaver Pfrengle has been appointed as new Commander of the EU Training Mission in Mali (EUTM Mali). The German General will take up his duties on July 28, replacing Brigadier General Alfonso García-Vaquero Pradal, who has held this position since October 2014.

16 June

EU increases support for the OSCE mission in Ukraine

The EU has allocated an additional fund of 18 million Euros to support OSCE in order to implement the Minsk agreements. The fund will be used to finance the work of the observers of the Special OSCE Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (6 million), as well as satellite images, analysis and other complementary monitoring tools (12 million).

17 June

Allies simulate amphibious landing in northern Poland

NATO forces took part in a simulated amphibious assault at Ustka, in northern Poland. The exercise, conducted by the British ship HMS Ocean and the American USS San Antonio, is part of BALTOPS naval exercise, held annually in the Baltic Sea since 1971. This year 17 countries have been attending the exercise – 14 NATO countries plus Finland, Georgia and Sweden – for a total of 5,600 troops involved. BALTOPS is an anti-submarine warfare and air defence simulation aimed to intercept suspect vessels and engage in amphibious landings.

19 June

EU extends sanctions in response to illegal annexation of Crimea

The Council of the EU extended until 23 June 2016 the restrictive measures adopted in response to the annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol. The sanctions prohibit: the import of products originating in Crimea or Sevastopol; the investments in the entire area by Europeans and

EU-based companies; the export of certain products and technologies.

22 June

Russia: EU extends economic sanctions

The Council of the EU extended until 31 January 2016 the economic sanctions introduced in response to the alleged Russia's destabilising role in the Ukraine crisis. The decision follows the one taken by the European Council of 19-20 March, when European leaders linked the duration of these sanctions to the complete implementation of the Minsk agreements, which is foreseen by December 31. The restrictions – imposed in July 2014 and reinforced in September 2014 – target some strategic areas of business, in particular the energy, defence and financial sectors and dual-use goods.

22 June

Council launches operation EUNAVFOR Med

The Council of the EU launched EUNAVFOR Med, the naval operation against human trafficking in the Mediterranean. The purpose of the operation, established on May 18, is to identify, capture and seize vessels and assets employed by smugglers in their activities. It will take place in three sequential phases: the first phase will focus on the surveillance and the assessment of the traffic in central and southern Mediterranean; the second involves the search and, if necessary, the seizure of suspicious vessels; finally, the third stage regards the dismantling of vessels and related assets and the capture of traffickers. The Council of the EU will decide the following steps taking into account a United Nations mandate, as well as the consent of the coastal State concerned.