

OBSERVATORY ON **IAI** EUROPEAN DEFENCE

MARCH 2015

In the spotlight

Mercier New Supreme Allied Commander

23 March

General Denis Mercier, French Air Force Chief of Staff, was appointed as the New Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (SACT), succeeding to General Jean-Paul Paloméros, French Air Force as well. SACT is one of NATO's two strategic commanders, and it is responsible for promoting and overseeing the transformation of Alliance's armed forces and capabilities, through the acquisition of new military capabilities, research projects and development of new doctrines.

6 March

Syria: strengthened sanctions against the regime supporters

The growing decay of the Syrian issue led the EU Council to adopt further restrictive measures against the supporters of the Syrian regime, including the asset freeze and travel bans against 7 persons and 6 entities. The total amount of persons and entities targeted by the sanctions is now up to 218 and 69. In December 2014, the Council reiterated that the EU would continue imposing sanctions as long as violence continues.

13 March

Ukraine: sanctions extended until September 2015

The Council has extended for a further period of six months the application of restrictive measures targeting actions against Ukraine's territorial integrity. These sanctions include the asset freeze and travel bans against 150 persons and 37 entities. On March 5, the Council also decided to extend the measures against 18 persons – including former President Viktor Yanukovich – focused on the freezing and recovery of illegally acquired Ukrainian state funds.

16 March

EU mission in Central African Republic launched

The Council has launched EUMAM RCA, the EU military advisory mission established last January in the Central African Republic. The mission will act in close cooperation with the UN forces (UN MINUSCA), in order to reform the security sector of the country and to offer support to the local military authorities. The mission located in Bangui and with a team of up to 60 staff under the leadership of French Brigadier General Dominique Laugel, will last 12 months, starting from the reaching of the Full Operational Capacity. The estimated cost for the preparatory phase and for the first year of the mission is €7.9 million. EUMAM RCA follows another military, EUFOR RCA, which ended on 15 March 2015.

16 March

EU training mission in Somalia extended

The Council has extended the EU military training mission in Somalia (EUTM Somalia) until 31 December 2016. Started in 2010, the mission aims to develop the security sector in the country by providing strategic advices to the Ministry of Defense and the National Armed Forces. The mission also provides professional training. EUTM Somalia acts under the framework of the EU Common Security and Defence Policy, which includes two additional missions: EUNAVFOR Somalia, instituted to fight piracy off the Somali coast, and EUCAP Nestor, aimed at strengthening maritime security in the Horn of Africa and the Western Indian Ocean.

20 March

SNMG2 completes operations in the Black Sea

The ships assigned to the Standing NATO Maritime Group Two (SNMG2) completed in March the Alliance interforce training period in the Black Sea. The training focused on anti-air,

anti-submarine and anti-ship war exercises and it involved Turkey, Bulgaria and Romania naval forces. The main aim of the training is to strengthen interoperability and facilitate a rapid integration of the Alliance's naval structures.

26 March

EU repeals restrictions, promised further support to Guinea-Bissau

The EU Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven Mimica, vowed the EU will provide €160 million to Guinea-Bissau to consolidate democracy, strengthen the rule of law and accelerate economic recovery. The announcement comes at an extremely important moment for the African country, which is finally embracing a democratic transition after years of political instability. After the military mutiny in 2011, the EU interrupted any kind of cooperation with the local government, according to article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement, which regulates the interregional relations between EU and ACP (African, Caribbean, Pacific) States. The situation further deteriorated in 2012, when a transitional government not recognized by the EU was established. The application of article 96 was suspended in July 2014 after the holding of free elections, and its measures definitely lifted in March 2015. Guinea-Bissau is now negotiating with the EU for further support in the framework of the XI European Development Fund (EDF), which is expected to provide additional €127 million to the African country in the period 2014-2020.

31 March

EDA publishes annual data on MSs defence

The European Defence Agency (EDA) published the 2013 annual report on aggregated defense data of the 27 EDA participating Member States (all EU MSs with the exception of Denmark). The total defense expenditure – declining since 2006 – reached €186 billion in 2013, meaning 1.45% of the MSs' GDP. In terms of distribution of the defense expenditure, for the first time in 2013, personnel-related expenditure dropped below 50%, while operation expenditures increased. On the contrary, the investment expenditure, comprising of equipment procurement and R&D expenditures, dropped, despite a slight recovery of the latter. At the same time, between 2012

and 2013 an increase was registered in the number of troops deployed outside the EU territory, which reached an average of 58,086 troops on an annual basis, that is 4% of the military forces of EDA Member States.

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