



CENTRUM TRANSATLANTICKÝCH VZTAHŮ
Prague Centre for Transatlantic Relations

PCTR Newsletter

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Message from the Director



Dear PCTR Readers,

Over the past month we have monitored and recorded many events in Transatlantic relations. As always, we have prepared our Bulletin where you can read about our own organized events.

Our international Conference entitled "Terrorism and the ownership of small arms: the EU proposal, the Israeli experience, and the Czech position" was received with great public interest on February 11. A number of experts participated in the event, including professor Israel Ziv, Jana Černochová, Milena Bačkovská, Jan Bartošek, Jiří Hynek, David Karasek and Lubomir Kovarik.

I would also like to invite you to a public lecture by writer and managing editor of The Economist Mr. Edward Lucas, entitled Cyberphobia: Confidence, Safety, Russia and the Internet." The event will be held on March 9 from 17:00 with the kind support of Hanns-Seidel-Stiftung, and located in the atrium of the CEVRO Institute (Jungmannova 17, Prague 1). More information can be found [here](#). However, if you can not make it, no problem. Follow us on [Twitter](#), where we will inform about the event online.

I firmly believe that we will meet again at our other events and wish you a pleasant reading of the second edition of the PCTR newsletter in 2016.

Respectfully yours,

*Alexandr Vondra
Director PCTR*

PCTR Bulletin

On February 11 PCTR, in cooperation with the LEX Association - an association to protect the rights of gun owners, organized an international conference entitled "Terrorism and the ownership of small arms: the EU proposal, the Israeli experience, and the Czech position." The lecture was opened and moderated by PCTR Director Alexandr Vondra, and followed by three keynote speeches by MEP Jana Černochová, Israeli expert on security Itay Gil, and a representative of the Interior Ministry, Milena Bačkovská. The break was followed by a panel discussion with Jana Bartoška of the Interior Ministry, President of the Association of Defence and Security Industry Jiri Hynek, board member of LEX Association David Karasek, and CEO of Czech Arms Factory, Lubomir Kovarik. Each section was followed by a debate with the audience.



The main theme of the conference was a response to the Commission's attempt to revise the directive governing the sale and possession of firearms. All speakers agreed that the Commission's proposal will not affect declared objectives in the fight against terrorism. The majority of participants identified the lack of effort to reduce the illegal arms trade as one of the main problems of the new proposal, as well as the potentially dangerous effort to regulate the legal possession of weapons by law abiding



citizens. The Honourable Member Černochová warned of the Commission's efforts to disarm the citizens, and thus limit their freedom. Professor Gil then contributed his experience from Israel, where the key to combating terrorism and increasing overall security is marked not only by the actual possession of weapons, but also by thorough training. Milena Bačkovská reminded the audience that the current Czech regulations as well as the

situation in some Member States is quite strict. In the second part of the event, the panelists agreed that we must confront the Commission proposal, seeking key support among other member countries. Adoption of the proposal would also have considerable economic consequences. Restrictions on the production of weapons and ammunition on the territory of the EU, according to Jiri Hynek, could mean the loss of skills that we need and a deterioration of the security situation.

We would like to acknowledge the generous support of our event partners, including LEX Association, an association to protect the rights of gun owners, Czech Arms Factory, and Mr. Peter Mothejl. Thanks are also due to our media partners for the event, including the Czech-Israeli Chamber of Commerce, the Defence and Security Industry Association, and Security Magazine.

Media coverage of the event can be found on [iDnes.cz](http://idnes.cz), ParlamentListy.cz, in the reporting of [TV Barrandov](http://TVBarrandov) and in Security Magazine [here](#) and [here](#).

News from the Euroatlantic Relationship (February 2016)

In the United States on February 1, primaries of both major political parties were held to choose candidates in this year's presidential election. In the first Republican election victory in Iowa, Senator Ted Cruz was surprisingly favored over billionaire Donald Trump, with senator Marco Rubio coming in third. In subsequent primaries in New Hampshire (Feb. 9), South Carolina (Feb. 20) and Nevada (23 February), Donald Trump established a significant margin. Several other candidates withdrew after inconclusive results in individual states from the fight for the nomination, including former favorite Jeb Bush. Before Super Tuesday (the March 1 elections will be held in several states at once) Trump, Cruz and Rubio remain ahead of Ohio Governor John Kasich and neurosurgeon Ben Carson in the battle for the Republican nomination. The Democratic primaries are led by former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who in February won in Iowa, Nevada and South Carolina. Senator Bernie Sanders and succeeded only in New Hampshire thus far. The results of Super Tuesday confirmed the lead of Trump and Clinton, with Clinton winning in seven states, Sanders in four, Trump in seven states, Cruz in three, and Rubio one.

<http://edition.cnn.com/2016/02/29/politics/super-tuesday-republicans-democrats-vote/>

The European Union agreed with the United States to the conditions of transatlantic data exchange on February 2. The previous legal framework was canceled by last year's EU court decision that responded to fear of the tracking and accumulation of data of European citizens by U.S. secret services. The new agreement should improve data protection for Europeans and clarify the situation for companies that handle data, such as Google or Facebook.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-eu-dataprotection-usa-record-idUSKCN0VB1RN>

In Amsterdam on the 4th and 5th of February, there was an informal meeting of defense ministers of EU member countries, where they spoke among other topics about EU foreign missions. According to the Czech Defence Minister Martin Stropnický, the Czech Republic wishes to strengthen its participation in these missions, namely by doubling the number of Czech soldiers operating in Mali. The meeting was also attended by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, who recalled the importance of closer cooperation in defense against instability in regions neighboring the EU. He also welcomed increased American military presence in Europe as well as a halt in the decline in defense spending of European allies.

<http://www.mocr.army.cz/informacni-servis/zpravodajstvi/ministri-obrany-eu-jednali-v-amsterdamu-119102/>, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_127633.htm?selectedLocale=en

The UN Human Rights Commission decided on February 5 in favor of the founder of WikiLeaks Julian Assange, who is in hiding at the Embassy of Ecuador in London. The day before the publication of the decision, Assange promised to leave the embassy and was allowed to withhold if the commission decided against it. Julian Assange is accused of the disclosure of secret information allegedly made by publishing confidential documentation of American diplomacy. In Sweden, he faced allegations of rape considered circumstantial.

http://www.lidovsky.cz/komise-osn-rozhodla-ve-prospech-zakladatele-wikileaks-assange-pise-bbc-1mu-zpravy-svet.aspx?c=A160204_104107_In_zahranici_ELE

From February 12 to 14 February in Bavaria, Munich's annual security conference took place. The main issues discussed included the ongoing war in Syria, the migration crisis, and the increase in threat from Russia and Eastern Europe. Many analysts evaluated the speeches of certain representatives as signaling the beginning of a new Cold War. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe in particular have expressed concern about the current foreign and security policies of Russia,

which according to them requires the increasing of NATO forces deployed in the area. Germany and other Central European countries noted the significant risk of current immigration crisis, caused in large part by the war in Syria. For many countries, it is the primary task at present is the struggle against the Islamic state and end the Syrian conflict. According to Russian Prime Minister Medvedev, however, the most urgent task is to defeat terrorists and the need to invoke international sanctions. His speech, however, aroused negative reactions, mainly due to the controversial Russian bombing of civilian targets in Syria and Russia's involvement in the conflict in Ukraine.

<http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/international/europe/2016/02/18/european-divisions-drive-munich-conference-while-russia-circles/80489372/>

At a meeting of defense ministers of NATO member countries in Brussels on Feb. 11, an agreement was reached under which the Alliance is involved in solving migration crisis in Europe. NATO ships will move in the Aegean Sea, and under the agreement it will be possible to return rescued migrants to Turkey. The main objective of the operation would be not only care of the migrants themselves, but also the combating of smugglers and human trafficking.

<http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/ct24/svet/1690612-lode-nato-se-rozmistuji-v-egejskem-mori-aliance-se-zapoji-do-migracni-krize>

At the age of 93, on February 16 former UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali passed away. He came from a family of influential Egyptian Coptic Christians and worked in the Foreign Ministry for a long period, where, among other things, he worked on the peace talks between Egypt and Israel in the late 1970s. He was elected UN Secretary General in 1991, the first African in this function. Boutros-Ghali also wrote a report, called Agenda for Peace, which proposed the strengthening and expansion of the UN mission in response to the end of the Cold War. During his tenure, however, he was criticized mainly for the lackadaisical approach of the United Nations during the conflict in Rwanda and other countries.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35590039>

Ukrainian Prime Minister Jaceňuk landed a vote of confidence in the government despite the fact that the Parliament expressed dissatisfaction with the functioning of the government. Political representation of the country has been weakened by mutual disputes, accusations of corruption, and contacts with oligarchs. Meanwhile, occupation of the eastern part of Ukraine by separatists and the unfavorable economic situation in the country continue.

<http://echo24.cz/a/ipVZz/ukrajinsky-parlament-je-nespokojeny-vladu-ale-nakonec-neodvolal>

According to several news services, there has been a significant increase in the influence of the Islamic state in Libya. Therefore, in the second half of February, the United States bombed terrorist positions in the North African country and are considering a further expansion of operations. According to U.S. Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter, however, it is conditional on Libyan agreement to a government of national unity. Involvement in the fight against the Islamic State in Libya is also under consideration in other countries, for example in France, which is sending an aircraft carrier and members of special units. There is also a concern with preventing the transfer of terrorists into neighboring countries and then on to Europe, therefore Great Britain has decided to send troops to Tunisia to help with border protection.

<http://www.militarytimes.com/story/military/2016/02/29/pentagon-signals-support-expanded-operations-libya/81107750/>, <http://echo24.cz/a/ihPBH/strach-o-tunisko-britove-posilaji-vojaky-na-hranice-s-libyi>

British Prime Minister David Cameron has announced the date of referendum on the withdrawal of Great Britain from the EU: June 23 this year. The Prime Minister himself expressed preference for remaining in the Union, but members of his government have been allowed to express their own opinion. A wish to exit from the EU has been expressed, for example, by the influential mayor of London and Cameron's possible successor as the head of the Conservative Party, Boris Johnson. British requirements for remaining in the Union are seen by some Member States as unacceptable, especially efforts to limit social benefits to people coming to the UK from other EU countries.

<https://echo24.cz/a/wJzjj/o-britanii-v-eu-rozhodne-referendum-v-cervnu-cameron-doporuci-setrvat>

On February 22, President Obama submitted to Congress a plan to complete the closure of the Guantanamo Bay in Cuba. Concerns about the prison closure center primarily on risk, as it would require a shift of the island's prisoners to American soil. Barack Obama promised to close Guantanamo in his election platform, mainly due to the controversial Guantanamo practices of prisoner torture and human rights violations. Closing the prison could also bring economic savings to the American public.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/24/us/politics/obama-guantanamo-bay.html>

In February, military operations between countries involved in the conflict in Syria continued. There were also other incidents, including the bombing of a hospital run by humanitarian organizations. According to members of the opposition, Russia or the Syrian government are likely behind the attack, but both sides have excluded the possibility of bombing of civilian targets. In the second half of February, diplomatic efforts to resolve the situation in Syria also continued. Peace talks were to be renewed, but were interrupted in late January. The United States and Russia also managed to mediate a ceasefire agreement, with most of the actors of the conflict in agreement. A ceasefire is one of the prerequisites of resumption of peace talks, which could take place as soon as early March. The truce is valid from February 27, and does not apply to terrorist organizations such as the Islamic State. The day after the start of the truce, a city in the province of Aleppo was bombed.

<http://edition.cnn.com/2016/02/18/middleeast/msf-health-care-syria-collapse/>,

<http://echo24.cz/a/izDRi/dohodli-jsme-s-ruskem-v-syrii-primeri-oznamil-kerry>

In Iran, parliamentary elections took place on February 26. According to the results, moderate reformists associated with the current President succeeded, sweeping all seats. Excessive change in the direction of the country is therefore expected. In addition to the 290 members of parliament elected, representatives to the influential Assembly of Experts, which selects the spiritual leader of the country, were also chosen.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35681250>