



CENTRUM TRANSATLANTICKÝCH VZTAHŮ
Prague Centre for Transatlantic Relations

PCTR Newsletter

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Message from the Director

Dear readers,

Another month full of significant events visited by almost 300 people is behind us. If you missed any of our events there is no need to worry as the audio records of the public events are available on our YouTube channel.

In late October, we organized our first Club meeting in the academic year 2014/2015. More information about our events in October is available on page No. 2 (PCTR Bulletin).

On this occasion we would like to invite you to one of the last public events this year – a seminar with the title "Lessons of 1989 Transition Czech and Korean Peninsula: A Model for Peaceful Reunification?", which will take place on 13th November at 15:00 in the atrium of the CEVRO Institute (Jungmannova 17).

We wish you a pleasant reading of the October Newsletter and I look forward to meeting you at our November event.

Yours faithfully,

*Alexandr Vondra
Director*

PCTR Bulletin

On 14th October, the Prague Centre for Transatlantic Relations organized the panel discussion "The Future of Kurdistan", which was held at the CEVRO Institute (Jungmannova 17, Praha 1) within the 18th annual Forum 2000 Conference.

The main speakers Falah Mustafa Bakir (Minister/Head of Department of Foreign Relations, Kurdistan Regional Government) and Sergei Danilochkin (Director, Radio Free Iraq) focused on current issues in Kurdistan and effects of the Islamic State offensive. The PCTR Director Alexander Vondra opened the event with his welcome speech. Tomáš Pojar, Vice President for International Relations of the CEVRO Institute, moderated the panel and discussion with the audience.



On 16th October, the director of the Prague Centre for Transatlantic Relations of the CEVRO Institute (PCTR) Alexandr Vondra participated at the conference „Promoting Free Media: Informing the 1989 Velvet Revolution and the Challenge“, which was organized by the Woodrow Wilson Center in cooperation with the Embassy of the Czech Republic in Washington and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. The aim of the event was to evaluate the contribution of Radio Free Europe’s broadcasting to the revolution in 1989. Alexandr Vondra and Jiri Pehe participated in the first panel



named "Western Broadcasting to Czechoslovakia" from the RFE/RL headquarters in Prague. Full video and more information about the event can be found [here](#).

On 23rd September, the PCTR and International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) at IDC College in Herzliya organized the conference entitled "Current Threats and Future of Global Jihad: Why Should We Fight Islamic State" about Islamic jihad and its globalization, including topics related to threats posed by the Islamic state. The event took place on 23rd October at the CEVRO Institute.





Ivan Langer, the former Interior Minister and current Chairman of the Board of the CEVRO Institute, opened the event. Tomáš Pojar, the Vice President for International Relations of the CEVRO Institute, moderated it.

Israeli experts Ely Karmon and Jonathan Spyer focused on the causes of the ongoing conflict in Iraq and Syria and highlighted the problems connected with the role of the West in it. In his speech, Ely Karmon introduced different Islamic organizations operating in the region. Jonathan Spyer reminded the audience that the current conflict should be perceived as a clash of two different forms of political Islam. Mr. Spyer added that the Western States should think carefully about their interests in the region, before they get involved in the conflict.

General Milan Kovanda provided a comparison of the current situation with the experience of the war in Afghanistan. General Kovanda highlighted some similarities between the Islamic State and Taliban. He added that destroying the enemy should not be the only objective of the military action. The radical ideology of Islamists must be eliminated to win the battle.



Our thanks goes to the Civic Institute, reviewed journal Defense and Strategy, natoaktual.cz, erez.cz and Czech-Israeli Chamber of Commerce for media partnership.

On 30th of October, journalist Daniel Kaiser was a guest of the first PCTR Club meeting in the new academic year. PCTR fans had a unique opportunity to hear his story about writing a political biography of Vaclav Havel, with its second volume just published.

Mr. Kaiser spoke about his meetings with the former president and shared some previously unknown information about Havel's politics. The PCTR Director Alexandr Vondra, who hosted the event, added some of his own memories. Mr. Kaiser also spoke about the current state of the Czech media.



Events in Euro-Atlantic Relations (October 2014)

Jens Stoltenberg took the Office of the NATO Secretary General on 1st October. He takes over at a time when NATO is wrapping up its combat mission in Afghanistan, but faces new challenges from resurgent Russia to the east and Islamic State militants. The former Norwegian Prime Minister is known for his skills in forging compromises and good knowledge of Russia. As the prime minister, he negotiated a deal with Russia in 2010 that ended a four-decade dispute over its Arctic borders and built a personal friendship with then-president Dmitry Medvedev.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/10/01/us-ukraine-crisis-stoltenberg-idUSKCN0HQ46B20141001>

Czech Ministry of Defense will purchase recovery vehicles for Pandurs. The deal of recovery vehicles' delivery was announced by the ministry at the end of September. The expected price of five vehicles is 191 million Czech crowns. Czech army will mainly use these vehicles in field conditions or battle operations for recovery, draw-off, maintenance, servicing and technical help.

http://zpravy.idnes.cz/pandur-tendr-obrany-ministerstvo-vozidla-fit-domaci.aspx?c=A141005_105747_domaci_hv

Dozens of Czech soldiers left on 2nd October to serve at a military base in Bagram, Afghanistan. Some 150 Czech soldiers will have come to the base by the end of October to rotate their colleagues.

<http://www.ceskenoviny.cz/domov/zpravy/zacalo-stridani-ceskych-vojaku-v-afghanistanu-vymeni-se-jich-150/1129858>

Czech paratroopers have taken part in military drills in Germany, together with their American colleagues from 143rd Parachute Brigade. As the Czech Army informed on 3rd October, members of the 43rd Parachute Battalion from Chrudim had tested new American parachutes T11 during the drills.

<http://www.acr.army.cz/informacni-servis/zpravodajstvi/vysadkari-vyzkouseli-nove-americke-padak-y-ty-ceske-v-souboji-vyhraly--102923/>

Gunfire that led to death of at least 9 civilians took place on the Indo - Pakistani border on 6th October. Shooting and explosions scared thousands of villagers who left their homes. Indian side reported five victims and 35 injured. Pakistan informed about at least four killed and three injured. The incident has been one of the most serious truce breaches since 2003.

http://zpravy.idnes.cz/devet-lidi-zemrelo-po-prestrelce-mezi-indickymi-a-pakistanskymi-vojaky-1n6-zahranicni.aspx?c=A141006_115733_zahranicni_wlk

NATO and U.S. representatives met with Turkish officials in Ankara to discuss possible solutions in case that the border city of Kobani would be taken over by the Islamic state. Joint military strategy was the leading issue of the meeting that took place on 9th October.

http://www.natoaktual.cz/turecko-hosti-krizove-rozhovory-nato-a-usa-o-is-ftc-na-media.aspx?c=A141009_165221_na_media_m02

Turkish air forces launched bombing of Kurd separatists on 13th October. The airstrikes aimed at PKK positions in southern Turkey. Ankara claimed that the bombing was launched in response to Kurdish attacks on Turkish military base. It was the first attack on Kurdish separatists in Turkey in after two years.

http://zpravy.idnes.cz/turecko-kurdove-islamsky-stat-zprava-amnesty-international-p55-/zahranicni.aspx?c=A141014_094320_zahranicni_aha

According to secret reports, American and Iraqi troops found roughly 5,000 chemical warheads, shells or aviation bombs between 2004 and 2011. NY Times reported on 14th October that several U.S. soldiers were injured after coming into contact with chemical agents. They were reportedly given inadequate care and told not to talk about what had happened. These encounters carry worrisome implications, since Islamic State controls much of the territory where the chemical weapons were found.

http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/10/14/world/middleeast/us-casualties-of-iraq-chemical-weapons.html?_r=0

Czech Air Force has become responsible for the protection of the Iceland's air space. Czech pilots in Gripen fighters would guard Iceland from 15th October until the beginning of December. NATO members help to protect Iceland's air space as the country does not have its own air force.

http://www.natoaktual.cz/gripeny-uz-strezi-island-0h2-/na_zpravy.aspx?c=A141015_202449_na_zpravy_m00

Czech Defense Minister Martin Stropnický met with the new NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg on 17th October. They talked about the current security situation in Afghanistan, Ukraine and in the area controlled by the Islamic State. They also discussed Czech defense budget and deployment of Czech soldiers in foreign missions. During his two-day visit, Minister Stropnický also met with Czech Permanent Representative to NATO Jiri Sedivy, members of the Czech Permanent Representation and Czech Army representatives in NATO command.

<http://www.mocr.army.cz/informacni-servis/zpravodajstvi/martin-stropnicky-jednal-v-bruselu-s-jensem-stoltenbergem-103579>

Armed intruder entered the building of Canadian Parliament in Ottawa on 22nd October. He shot two soldiers before he got in, one of them later died while being transported to hospital. The attacker was shot dead in the shootout with the police. According to the police information, the assailant was 32 years old Michael Zehaf-Bibeau, a Canadian national of Algerian origin. Reportedly, his act was meant as revenge for Canadian participation in fighting against the Islamic State.

http://zpravy.idnes.cz/u-kanadskeho-parlamentu-byl-zastrelen-clovek-faj-/zahranicni.aspx?c=A141022_165229_zahranicni_bse

On 23rd October, The Senate of the Czech Republic approved a plan to deploy the Czech Army in foreign missions for two following years. Czech government introduced the plan on 20th October. Defense Minister Martin Stropnický stated that the mission in Afghanistan had the highest priority. Czech soldiers will continue to train Afghani military and police units. They will also participate on protection of allied forces in the country. Some 310 Czech soldiers are expected to operate in the new operation Resolute Protection under NATO commandment in the country.

Czech soldiers will also participate in the missions in Mali and in the Balkans. On the contrary, Czechs are not going to take part in operations in Golan Heights due to the presence of the terrorist group al - Nusra.

<http://www.ceskenoviny.cz/domov/zpravy/vlada-schvalila-zahranicni-mise-vojaku-na-roky-2015-a-2016/1137453>, <http://www.mocr.army.cz/informacni-servis/zpravodajstvi/vlada-schvalila-plan-misi-na-pristi-dva-roky-103662/>, http://www.natoaktual.cz/senat-podporil-zahranicni-mise-armady-dxu-na-zpravy.aspx?c=A141027_111418_na_zpravy_m00

Ukraine successfully conducted parliamentary elections on 26th October. Pro- European reformist parties won the election with significant majority. The highest number of votes was obtained by Yatseniuk's People's front followed by the Block of Petro Poroshenko. The third place was claimed by the Samopovich (Selfhelp) of Andrey Sadovy, the mayor of Lvov. The Opposition bloc, formed mainly by functionaries of former ruling Regions party, also got enough votes to gain seats in the Parliament as well as The Radical party of the ultranationalist Oleg Lyashko and Batkivshchina of Yulia Tymoshenko. The winning parties have immediately started negotiations about governing coalition in order to secure majority in the parliament.

<http://spravy.pravda.sk/svet/clanok/334623-jacenuk-ma-vlastny-navrh-koalicnej-zmluvy-ziada-post-premiera/>

The Czech Security Information Service (BIS) published its annual report for year 2013 on 27th October. BIS has identified inter-ethnic tensions in some regions as the most disturbing security threat. Anti – Roma sentiments in the society might represent serious problem for democracy according to the report. BIS also informed that secret agents from Russia and China were present in the Czech Republic. Finally, the criticism against Islam in the Czech society has been rising according to the report. BIS has warned that these attacks on Islam might result in radicalization of moderate Muslims.

<http://bis.cz/n/2014-10-27-vyrocní-zprava-2013.html>

Two Czech soldiers have been awarded with the Bronze Star Medal – the fourth highest U. S. individual military medal. The Commander of the 2nd company, Captain Jiri Pazdera and his Master Sergeant David Lavicka received the medals from Major General Stephen Townsend on 29th October.

http://www.mise.army.cz/aktualni-mise/afg-parwan-1sr-baf/zprav_parwan/velitel-a-vedouci-praporcik-2--strazni-roty-obdrzeli-vysoke-americke-vyznamenani-104029/

Kiev and Moscow finalized the deal on gas supplying after months of negotiations. The agreement was signed on 30th October by Ukrainian Minister for Energetics Yuriy Prodan and his Russian counterpart Alexander Novak. Ukraine promised to pay 1.6 billion dollars to Gazprom as soon as possible. By the end of the year, Kiev should have paid 3.1 billion in total. The agreement worth 4.6 billion dollars includes a discount of 100 dollars for every 1000 cubic meters. That means Kiev would pay to Gazprom 385 dollars for 1000 cubic meters. Leaving Head of the European Commission Jose Manuel Barroso, then European Commissioner for Energetics Günther Oettinger and his successor Maroš Šefčovič were present at the negotiations.

<http://spravy.pravda.sk/ekonomika/clanok/334838-kyjev-a-moskva-podpisali-dohody-o-plyne/>

The Czech Military Intelligence issued an annual report for year 2013 on 30th October. Jihadist's activities on social networks and spreading of radical ideas were identified as one of the most serious security threats.

<http://www.mocr.army.cz/informacni-servis/zpravodajstvi/o-snaze-ruska-ovlivnit-deni-na-ukrajine-vedelo-vojenske-zpravodajstvi-uz-loni-104046/>

More than two dozen Russian military aircrafts, including six military bombers, violated NATO and European airspace four times in the last week of October. Jets from eight countries as well as NATO own Baltic air policing force had to be deployed to handle the incidents. Taken together, they constitute the most serious air provocation mounted by Kremlin against the Alliance this year, if not in more than a decade, according to NATO officials. Unpredictable aircrafts represent potential threat mainly for the civil aviation.

http://www.natoaktual.cz/ruske-letouny-krouzily-evropou-dof-na-zpravy.aspx?c=A141030_180533_na_zpravy_m00

NATO has launched air-force alert due to an increasing activity of Russian air force in the European air space on 31st October. The secretary General Jens Stoltenberg added that recent Russian policy was undermining trust that had been built between Moscow and NATO since the end of the Cold War.

http://www.natoaktual.cz/nato-zvysuje-kvuli-rusku-pohotovost-d80-na-zpravy.aspx?c=A141031_131249_na_zpravy_m00

Czech soldiers participated on a two-week military exercise in Lithuania. Some 70 members of anti-aircraft unit moved to Baltic state on 31st October. Alliance has conducted series of maneuvers as a reaction to Russian annexation of Crimea and the Ukrainian crisis.

http://www.natoaktual.cz/cesko-posila-protiletadlovou-jednotkud-o-litvy-ft7-na-zpravy.aspx?c=A141031_131610_na_zpravy_m00