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**Significant military initiative and diplomatic success: The U.S. and Arab states  
launch massive airstrikes against Islamic State (ISIL) positions in Syria**

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On September 23, early in the morning, the U.S. have launched, together with several Arab states in the Middle East, massive air strikes against important positions the Islamic State (ISIL) controls in Syria, major news agencies are reporting. U.S. *Department of Defense (DoD) News* reports that “U.S. and partner nation forces have begun airstrikes inside Syria against terrorists from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, Pentagon Press Secretary Navy Adm. John Kirby said in a statement today. The strikes are being undertaken through a mix of fighter and bomber aircraft and Tomahawk Land Attack missiles, he said”. Kirby also said that “given that these operations are ongoing, we are not in a position to provide additional details at this time”<sup>1</sup>.

*CNN* reports, quoting “a senior U.S. military official”, that “all foreign partners participating in the strikes with the United States are Arab countries”, and that “those nations are Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Jordan”. Undisclosed “diplomatic sources” told *CNN* that “Qatar was also involved, though it was not clear whether Qatar actually conducted airstrikes itself”<sup>2</sup>.

Until now, the U.S. forces have launched roughly 190 air strikes against ISIL forces in Iraq. President Barack Obama authorized, last week, planning and preparing airstrikes against IS in Syria too, directly warning the regime in Damascus not to use its large AA defensive arsenal against U.S. combat airplanes. On September 15, *Al Arabyia News* reported (quoting *New York Times*) that “President Barack Obama told visitors to the White House last week he would not hesitate to retaliate against Syrian government

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<sup>1</sup> Claudette ROULO, “U.S. Begins Airstrikes Against ISIL in Syria”, *DoD News*, September 23, 2014, text accessed at the Internet address <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=123233>

<sup>2</sup> Jim SCIUTTO, Mariano CASTILLO and Holly YAN, “U.S. airstrikes hit ISIS inside Syria for first time”, *CNN*, September 23, 2014, at the Internet address [http://edition.cnn.com/2014/09/22/world/meast/u-s-airstrikes-isis-syria/index.html?hpt=hp\\_t1](http://edition.cnn.com/2014/09/22/world/meast/u-s-airstrikes-isis-syria/index.html?hpt=hp_t1)

forces should they open fire on U.S. aircraft targeting militants belonging to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria”<sup>3</sup>.

### **Major diplomatic success**

*This military move and its still unknown tactical results are a very clear sign that the most recent diplomatic initiative of the U.S. in the Middle East already is significantly successful.* More than a week ago, media reports clearly stated that the U.S Secretary of State John Kerry is trying to build a regional coalition able to stop and defeat the Islamic State. On September 14, some media reports indicated that “U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry was ‘extremely encouraged’ by pledges of military assistance against ISIL militants by countries inside and outside the Middle East and that some nations had offered ground troops”. The open source we are quoting here also said that “Kerry has been touring the Middle East to try to secure backing for U.S. efforts to build a coalition to fight the ISIL militants who have grabbed territory in Syria and Iraq”, and that Kerry had said, on a *CBS* program, that “we have countries in this region, countries outside of this region, in addition to the United States, all of whom are prepared to engage in military assistance, in actual strikes if that is what it requires. And we also have a growing number of people who are prepared to do all the other things”<sup>4</sup>.

### **Romania openly supports the international coalition aimed at defeating ISIL**

On September 17, Romanian Prime Minister Victor Ponta publicly declared that *Romania is going to support the international effort aimed at defeating ISIL.* He also stated that the Romanian contribution will be at “strategic and operational” level, that Romania is going to act this way along the same basic foreign policy lines it has constantly pursued “along several years”, and that the Romanian decision has been

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<sup>3</sup> “Obama threatens to hit Assad air defenses: report”, *Al Arabiya News*, September 15, 2014, text accessed at the Internet address <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2014/09/15/Obama-threatens-to-hit-Assad-air-defenses-report.html>

<sup>4</sup> “Several countries offer ground troops, fighter jets against ISIL”, *World Bulletin*, September 14, 2014, at the Internet address <http://www.worldbulletin.net/todays-news/144372/several-countries-offer-ground-troops-fighter-jets-against-isil>

communicated to “partners from international and trans-Atlantic community” by both the Defense and Foreign Affairs ministers in Bucharest<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> “Victor Ponta: România va participa la coaliția împotriva grupării Stat Islamic”, *Wall-Street.ro*, September 17, 2014, at the Internet address <http://www.wall-street.ro/articol/Politic/172459/romania-va-participa-la-coalitia-impotriva-gruparii-stat-islamic.html>