



PRESS RELEASES

EU NAVFOR Atalanta: 10 years of fighting piracy in Somalia

EU Naval Force (EU NAVFOR) Operation ATALANTA, the first European maritime Common Security Defence Policy operation was launched on 8 December 2008, to tackle the Somali Piracy crisis, in support of UN Security Council Resolution 1816 (2008). At the time, international maritime traffic plying east-west trade routes between Europe and Asia saw violent criminal groups operating from the Somali shore, seizing increasing numbers of vessels and their crews and cargoes for ransom. As a direct consequence, humanitarian efforts in the region were adversely impacted and the UN arms embargo continued to be violated.

High Representative/Vice-President Federica **Mogherini** said: "Peace and security are at the heart of the partnership between the EU and Africa. With Operation EU NAVFOR Atalanta our women and men in uniform have for the past ten years successfully been fighting piracy, to the benefit of our two continents alike. We will keep working with the same commitment to avoid that piracy comes back in the area. EU NAVFOR Atalanta is a success story of our EU defence put to action."

Key achievements

There has been both a human and an economic impact from Somali piracy. More than 215 people are known to have been taken hostage, many of whom suffered various physical injuries and / or mental traumas. Others were even killed by Somali pirates. Over the last ten years, EU NAVFOR Atalanta has helped to greatly reduce the impact of Somali piracy:

- From a high of 176 attacks in 2011, incidents have gone down to a total of just four failed attacks in 2018.
- Since October 2016, no hostages or vessels have been held.
- EU NAVFOR has a 100% record in ensuring the safe delivery of 1.8 million tonnes of World Food Programme (WFP) aid to Somali ports, through the application of Best Management Practices including the deployment of armed security teams known as Autonomous Vessel Protection Detachments (AVPDs), to WFP vessels.

- The cost of Somali piracy to the shipping industry had reduced from circa \$7 billion in 2011 to \$1.4 billion by the end of 2017. For European countries and citizens this has enabled the continued free passage of goods and materials to and from Europe and has helped reduce costs to the European producer and prices for the European consumer.

A joint effort

To date, more than 21 EU Member States and six partner countries have directly contributed personnel and assets to EU NAVFOR. A cooperative approach between the EU and other international actors has made it possible to consolidate the successful work of the Operation even further. Since 2008, EU NAVFOR has worked hand-in-glove with other multinational naval forces operating in the region, in particular NATO and the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF), as well as with navies of other countries, such as China, India, Japan, Republic of Korea and Russia, to ensure the safe passage of merchant shipping.

Building capacity in the region

EU NAVFOR has contributed significantly to building the capacities of partner countries in the region and the development of international best practices, in addition to its primary operational tasks.

Although the threat of piracy has diminished in recent years, other maritime security threats very much remain in place, including the smuggling of arms, narcotics, people and wildlife. EU NAVFOR cooperates with other EU and international military and law enforcement bodies in the monitoring and passing of information concerning these activities.

The Operation continues to champion new ways of maximising international effectiveness in countering maritime threats to merchant vessels transiting these strategic shipping routes, to ensure the continued freedom of navigation for shipping, and thus the safe passage of their crews, materials and goods to European producers and consumers.

Background

EU NAVFOR contributes substantially to the capacity building of partner countries:

- It has helped in the development of the internationally accepted Best Management Practices for merchant vessels transiting the piracy high risk area. EU NAVFOR is also home to the Maritime Security Centre - Horn of Africa (MSCHOA), which coordinates information provided by commercial shipping, to assess vessel vulnerability, and which has achieved unparalleled levels of civil-military and international cooperation between maritime stakeholders. This is further reinforced through initiatives like the Shared Awareness and Deconfliction (SHADE) mechanism for military and commercial shipping.
- EU NAVFOR has successfully negotiated transfer agreements with Kenya, Tanzania, Seychelles and Mauritius to establish a “legal finish”, thereby enabling suspected pirates to be tried in an African court of law, while ensuring that due process is applied and the legal rights of suspects are upheld. To date, 166 suspects have been tried before the courts, with 145 convictions and 21 acquittals.
- EU NAVFOR further contributes to the training and education of African military and law enforcement forces and their legal and judicial systems, from Djibouti to the Seychelles to Madagascar, thereby practising local maritime capacity-building in support

of security and development.

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