



# HOUSE OF LORDS

Unrevised transcript of evidence taken before

## **The Select Committee on the European Union**

External Affairs (Sub-Committee C)

Inquiry on

### **COMBATING SOMALI PIRACY: THE EU'S NAVAL OPERATION ATALANTA - FOLLOW-UP REPORT**

*Evidence Session No. 5.*

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*Questions 176 - 234*

THURSDAY 21 JUNE 2012

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Witness: Alexander Rondos

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Members present

Lord Teverson (Chairman)  
Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury  
Baroness Eccles of Moulton  
Lord Foulkes of Cumnock  
Baroness Henig  
Lord Inge  
Lord Jay of Ewelme  
Lord Jopling  
Lord Radice  
Lord Williams of Elvel  
Baroness Young of Hornsey

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**Examination of Witness**

**Alexander Rondos**, European Union Special Representative for the Horn of Africa.

**Q176 The Chairman:** Mr Rondos, I very much welcome you to our Committee, and I was pleased that you could sit in earlier. In fact, there are few people that arrive where you are with such a strong recommendation from the previous session—made unprompted without knowing you were there—so that is excellent. We are particularly pleased that you could respond so quickly to our request to come to this inquiry. Let me just go through the formalities by saying that this is a public session, which is being webcast and also being transcribed. We shall send you a copy of the transcription so, if we have made any errors in the way that it has been recorded, you will be able to correct that.

I know you are very keen to start the session, so perhaps I could ask you to introduce yourself and say a little bit about how you have got to the position that you are in. The first question is also fairly broad and will allow you to give us a run-down of how you see the situation.

**Alexander Rondos:** Thank you very much, my Lord Chairman, and thank you all for inviting me. My name is Alex Rondos. I am a Greek national, although you can tell by my accent that

there have been influences other than Greek in my life—and far profounder than Greek. I grew up in east Africa, so I am back in some rather familiar territory.

My background is in the world of development and emergency relief, and then slowly I moved to politics in my own country—I should say that I find Somalia more predictable than my own country right now so there is a strange consolation in the work I am doing. I have done a lot of work on Balkans in the last 10 years in my capacity in Greece, where I was a special adviser to the recent former Prime Minister George Papandreou. Through that I knew Baroness Ashton and had been able to help a little bit behind the scenes on some issues there. She knew that I had always been interested in the Horn and eventually asked me if I would consider this position, which I was very glad to take up. I began in January.

All that I can tell you, in brief, is that my mandate covers Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia, Kenya and Uganda. In the Sudans, there is a special representative—as you know, Dame Rosalind Marsden—so thank goodness I do not have to go near that one, but we collaborate a lot because a lot of the issues intersect. I have to cover everything, including Somalia and Eritrea—I was there last week to see if we could start checking out quite how dodgy it is, as I noticed you described it. The Nile River basin is another rather worrying issue that has to be managed carefully. My mandate is wide, but I have been asked to pay particular attention to Somalia, and that is what I have been doing.

From the outset, I decided just to get out there and I have spent a good deal of time in the field, actually in Mogadishu, so that I can get the Somalis accustomed to the notion that remote-control relationships will be a thing of the past. We are going to get back there and they are going to get used to having us dealing with them much more directly. That is what I have been trying to do—it is a more political role that I have tried to assume and have been asked to assume. Right now, quite frankly, my worry has been that the European Union, as a whole, tends to get viewed in much of that part of the world as a cash cow to be milked at

will. That has to end. My job is, in effect, to say, “Well, if you want our cash, there is a series of other parallel discussions we are going to have regarding politics, security and the like before we just dish out money”. I am putting it with a broad sweep, but that is really the intent with which I have been asked to assume my responsibilities. If I may, I will just leave it at that.

**Q177 The Chairman:** Yes, indeed. Thank you. That is very useful as an introduction. Perhaps I could move on and ask; how do you assess the situation in Somalia itself, its provinces of Puntland and Somaliland—which sometimes seem completely different universes to us back here—and, indeed, the wider Horn of Africa?

**Alexander Rondos:** To the situation in Somalia, the word “optimism” cannot ever—and will not for a while yet—be attached with Somalia, but there is no doubt that we are seeing some changes that I think take us in a positive direction. On the political front, we have all been engaged, as has the current leadership of Somalia, in ending a transition. Now, we need to be very clear here that we do not get lost in semantics. The formal transitional Government will end, but the real work of transition in Somalia begins only now. I think that we need to be very clear about that. It is going to take a year or two for things to settle, if—as one hopes—things continue to move in the right direction.

What does that mean? This change in August is about a new political dispensation arrived at without elections. I think we must understand that frame. In order to legitimise it, one has turned to the very traditional structures of the clan elders, who are traditionally those who endorse much that goes on socially within the country. So, as we speak, there are about 130 clan elders gathered in Mogadishu who are selecting the members of the constituent assembly. That should, we hope, in the next two or three weeks, be a finished task. They will do two things: they will select—I use the word “select”—a Parliament and they will also

start reviewing and commenting on the constitution, which is about now to be made public as a draft constitution. That is the political process.

My own view is that, in the next eight weeks, there will be a bumpy landing but this plane will land on the airstrip, as it were. It is what follows afterwards that is the key. I am sure that there will be a new political dispensation and there will be a leadership. We may see some familiar faces and we have to work out how we handle that. Having heard the earlier testimony, I think that the challenge is going to be how one gradually folds into the politics of Somalia those parts and regions—I am talking specifically about those that have been under the authority of al-Shabaab until lately—in south central Somalia. As they are brought back under control, how politically they are represented and folded into the politics of Somalia is the hard politics of what people are going to have to manage well. That is certainly what I tell my colleagues in the meetings that I have with other international authorities. With a light touch, we have to make sure this does not spill over and get out of control. That is the heart of the game.

Puntland seems to chug along quite well on its own. There is a vestige of law and order; there is a form of government. I think Puntland has very wisely demonstrated that it is as well to show and put on a good track record because, when the real debate comes of what degree of federalism should exist in Somalia—and that is the debate, constitutionally—Puntland can justify its pitch that it would like to be relatively autonomous within a federal constitution. I think that is its game.

Somaliland, as I think you all know very well, has proven that it is capable of standing up and attending to itself. However, it has a vital interest, whatever its constitutional future and fate, in making sure the rest of Somalia is secure and stable. The one thing that it cannot afford, whether it is independent or not, is to have an unstable Somalia. That is why it is very encouraging that these discussions are actually occurring at Chevening right now.

**The Chairman:** Thank you. That is very good and useful introduction.

**Q178 Lord Jay of Ewelme:** Thank you. Before I come on to Operation Atalanta, you said you had spent some time in Mogadishu. Could you just tell us to what extent is Mogadishu a functioning town or functioning city now? Some of us have been to other rather nasty places, Duber and Gomer and so on. But, where is Mogadishu now on the scale of other more or less functioning African cities?

**Alexander Rondos:** Somalia is a very strange place in the sense that—if I said to you, it is an economy without a state. Mogadishu is bustling. I mean it. It is lovely. Anyone who has known Somalia and eastern Africa, the colours are back, the markets are open. It is just lovely. The sad fact is that people like myself have to go around with a flak jacket in an armoured personnel carrier; I wish I could go and just join in.

It is an interesting little litmus test, but it hit me when a Somali businessman decided to put up glass in his shop front window in Mogadishu. Then I said, “Either the guy’s a complete fool or he knows something that we all do not really know.” So, Somalis are taking their money back in, the planes are full. They are coming back. They are bringing money, they are trying to invest. Houses are being rebuilt. In fact, there is a shortage of labour in Garowe in Puntland, because they are all coming down to Mogadishu because there is so much demand for labour, the masons and the like. Now, this is all anecdotal, but I hope it does begin to give you a picture of a place that is beginning to take off.

Now, the interesting question is why. Here we have to register and acknowledge a success. We all collectively, and Britain has played a major role in this, have been financing and supporting the African Union forces. They have delivered the security. So, it is our collective treasure but African blood has been spilt to achieve this. This is very unusual and rather special, as it were. So, the African Union forces are there. They have cleared the place up. Yes, we are going to get constant—it is the asymmetric attacks that will come from Al-

Shabaab. That will continue, we must be quite realistic. But the fact that Somalis are returning, they are investing.

On the economy, you are beginning to feel an economy in Mogadishu. We must maintain that, because it then becomes the beacon for the rest of the country. Especially what is currently still under al-Shabaab control.

**Q179 Lord Jay of Ewelme:** We will come on to Atalanta in a second, but what we have been hearing quite a lot is that the anti-piracy operations are only going to work if there is also a degree of development on land. That approach, that model, would you say that is plausible?

**Alexander Rondos:** Absolutely. It is not only plausible, but necessary.

**Lord Jay of Ewelme:** I know it is necessary.

**Alexander Rondos:** Oh, yes. It is. Yes. Earlier I think I heard people made mention of stabilisation. I think this is an absolutely critical issue and it links into the question about Atalanta and how one deals with piracy. The challenge in Somalia right now is to make sure that one can synchronise the establishment of civil administration with the advance of the military. Because as AMISOM clears with its Somali allies, local allies or the Ethiopians clear areas up, the issue is who moves in and establishes a degree of governance, law and order so that the citizens can turn around and say, “Well, this is better than Shabaab rule” at the very least. Now, I believe that in the next year this is the strategic challenge in Somalia. But we also have to be very imaginative and also widen the angle of the geographic lens. We should not simply be talking about the stabilisation of areas, if you will, retrieved from Shabaab control. It is the stabilisation of the entire country, including the coastal areas.

What does stabilisation mean? Having a modicum of decent Government. You are not shooting each other and you are part of a decent economy, or an economy that is functioning. That is why extending the notion of stabilisation and investing in the coastal

areas becomes an absolute key in offering an alternative incentive to communities for whom, in most instances, and clearly now, reluctantly feel they need to allow or tolerate piracy to operate from near their communities.

**Q180 Lord Jay of Ewelme:** Thank you very much for that. Coming on to Atalanta, how do you think that has performed? How well has it performed in the last couple of years and what would you see as having been its main achievements in the combating of piracy? A subsequent point, which we did discuss with Nick Kay and others, is that clearly something needs to continue beyond 2014. Do you see that happening? How much longer is one going to have to have a naval operation offshore?

**Alexander Rondos:** Let us not forget Atalanta is one of a variety of presences in that part of the Indian Ocean, but Atalanta has been the most active. Now, my assessment would be that it has done a very impressive job when you think of how a relatively few ships cover a geographic area that is the size of Europe, in effect. The effect has been quite striking, and I think that speaks also to the imagination and skill with which the operation has been commanded from the military, from the naval side. I do want to acknowledge that. Since I came to my duties it has been Admiral Potts, and it has been the way it has been run. An awful lot of what they do never comes to the public eye. So let me just drill a little deeper on that issue.

Firstly, what we have noticed is certainly the attacks by pirates have diminished. There are far fewer ships now that are held and there are fewer seafarers who are held hostage. But they are still there and that is a tragic condition that they are in. Now, what the pirates have been doing is getting mother-ships, so they are extending way, way—it is 1,000 nautical miles and beyond—into the Indian Ocean. What I think Atalanta has also been able to do is locate and chase down the mother-ships. So they are spreading far and wide rather successfully. That is regarding Atalanta proper.



Then, what we referred to as the disruption of pirate logistical dumps action was taken, which indeed was very limited. There were two things to bear in mind on that. Firstly, it was rather useful that the European Union agreed to, if you will, fire shots in anger—if I may put it that way—and to do it having said it might do it. That is an interesting signal and I, who have to travel politically in the region, have sensed a difference. At head of Government level people are saying, “By golly, you actually did it”. It is an interesting political reaction one gets. Secondly, there are very few caveats on this. Having been given a green light, Admiral Potts and his commanders can pick and choose when they want to do the next, and that will depend on climate opportunity and the like. So this is like a Damocles sword that hangs over the various pirate groups, and they know that at some point it may happen again. It has that simple effect of, if you will, breaking little bits of the chain that constitute the business of piracy.

**Q181 Lord Jay of Ewelme:** On going on after 2014, can you give a brief overview on that point?

**Alexander Rondos:** I am sorry, absolutely. Between now and 2014 I think several things would need to be done if we feel we have a serious exit strategy for Atalanta, if we want to put it that way. First of all the programme now referred to as EUCAP Nestor has to get going, and that is why it is more than timely that it begins hopefully this summer. Secondly, I think within the context of that it is a question of training and equipment and of getting the various countries really to buy into this. The eastern coast of Africa is, if you will, the wild west of the littoral of the Indian Ocean—let us put it that way—and it is time to put some order there. Let us get local sheriffs trained to do it well in coastal maritime. That is the objective. If we can start moving on this fast, then I think we begin to have a real effect.

Somaliland and Puntland are fine—this is again going to come back to the issue of the stabilisation of south central Somalia. It is from right up below Puntland down to Kismayo

and below. That area has to come back under control and be properly policed, as it were. If we have that then I think we can look ahead to 2014 with some degree of hope, and that must be matched with real investment from the development side into the east coastal communities.

**Q182 Lord Jay of Ewelme:** Do you see the possibility, therefore, of Atalanta not continuing beyond 2014, or do you assume that in some way or another it will be rolled over?

**Alexander Rondos:** It may have to be rolled over. It is very difficult to tell. We cannot afford to find ourselves in the position in late 2014 where we are saying we have done nothing towards an exit strategy. The hydraulics will be there, and we will have to assess that by mid to autumn 2014.

**Q183 Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury:** We have heard from other sessions about the problems of what to do with pirates once captured and, indeed, last week we were told there were an estimated 2,000 pirates currently awaiting trial and that prosecution is more likely to happen if there is a possibility of transferring these prisoners out of the countries where they have been captured. Which countries that have agreed to take pirates for prosecution are most in need of support and assistance? What, in your view, can the EU offer and what does it offer?

**Alexander Rondos:** The ones that have been most helpful, obviously, are the Seychelles and Mauritius, but the Seychelles has a capacity problem. They actually have their own criminals also to deal with, and I think that is an issue that we should treat with the greatest understanding and sympathy. Puntland and Somaliland have offered and have helped. I was listening to some of the earlier conversation you were having on this, and I think the prisons that have been built to deal with pirates are in fact pretty good. I had our people check so that we can be sure of that.

There is a very interesting challenge here that we are talking about 2,000 people so far. I want to step back a bit to pose a larger question—which I must confess I posed within our system in the EU—which is that we have programmes for the demilitarisation of militias, we do training programmes for the demobilisation of people who have been killing on behalf of warlords in Somalia. We do this all over the world, such programmes. The pirates that are captured, many of these are just kids, they are like the mules for drug runners. They are intimidated—

**Q184 Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury:** Are they all male? are they all men?

**Alexander Rondos:** Yes, I think so. I am sure the report would have come in very quickly if a female pirate had been found, but to my knowledge, yes. I think there is a broader issue here. We need to ask ourselves once we get them: how long are we going to keep a 17 year old kid who has been put on to a ship and told to go out and possibly make a bit of money on the side? Are we going to keep them in prison for 15 years, or is there something else we could possibly do? I would love to catch the kingpins who have been running all of this and put them away for life. That is one thing, but—

**Q185 Baroness Eccles of Moulton:** Would it all collapse if the kingpins were eliminated?

**Alexander Rondos:** It would probably make a huge—yes, absolutely. This is organised crime. Piracy is now a speculative exercise. The thing that we already have to be thinking of is that, if piracy is no longer lucrative, the worrying thing is that these are people who are probably sufficiently organised to move into illicit movement of guns, drugs or people.

**Q186 Baroness Eccles of Moulton:** So they have to be the target?

**Alexander Rondos:** Yes, and so that is what we must get to. Sorry, I have drifted from your question, but I wanted to put it in a broader context.

Puntland and Somaliland already do it. In Somalia, Mogadishu do not even consider it—no one would when they have trouble just keeping their own prisoners. It is just out of the question. So the question then is: are there any other countries that could do it? Countries like Kenya and Tanzania are understanding but are a bit reluctant to throw themselves fully into it.

There has been a parallel discussion, as I am sure you are aware, as to where should people be tried. There was one suggestion that Arusha should be turned into a centre. I noticed recently that a country in the Gulf offered to set up an international court for this but we do still have a problem, which is: when they are captured, what are the judicial procedures by which pirates can then be taken from whatever is the flag country to be tried somewhere? That still remains an overall challenge. There is no doubt about that.

**Q187 Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury:** Just picking up on what you said, which was very interesting, about the youth of a lot of the pirates and whether we want to throw them in prison and throw away the key, I asked last week about the EU development fund and was told that it is to go towards general support. Is that something that could be used in rehabilitation, as it were?

**Alexander Rondos:** Yes, with anything that is a programme that could be developed and that shows it could deliver some results, our systems would and should look at it.

**Q188 Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury:** So a rehabilitation programme of some kind is something that you are looking at?

**Alexander Rondos:** I have asked. I want to be clear: I have absolutely no line authority in the EU—I am like an envoy. So what I do is raise questions and try to prod systems. I cannot and do not want to commit the system in any way, but to me it is just absolutely logical. We do this everywhere else in the world for all sorts of other people who actually do even nastier things.

**The Chairman:** Let us move on. Lord Jopling, I know we have gone through some of these issues, but probably you would like to pursue one or two of them.

**Q189 Lord Jopling:** I wonder if you would tell us how effective you believe the prosecution and sentencing has been of pirates up to now, and to what extent it could be improved? You have talked about countries that might assist in doing this. I have always been rather surprised that some of the very rich Gulf states have not been prepared to assist over this because, after all, they have a great interest in the transportation of oil. I have always been surprised that people have not talked about the willingness or failure of the Gulf states. I was also very interested in a point we just did latch on to a few moments ago. We have been sent a report of your press conference two days ago in Brussels, which says, “Therefore it was important to pursue the financiers of piracy through judicial means.” That maybe sounds rather an optimistic aim. How practical is it in fact to get at those people who are well protected in an area where judicial means are pretty minimal?

Then finally, of the prisons you are talking about in Somalia, are the UN building just one? I asked this previously and did not receive a good answer. How many inmates will they take, and is it not unbelievable that the UN people there are not armed? Sorry, that is a whole string of questions.

**Alexander Rondos:** That is fine. Let me start with the last because I do not think I can answer it adequately, frankly, and what I would like to do is go and ask my system to come up with all the facts and send them to you and to the Committee. I think that is the fairest way to deal with it. I would just be fluffing it in the mean time.

Regarding the Gulf, interestingly I am going to Dubai next week—in fact, Minister of State Bellingham will be there as well—for an anti-piracy conference. The Gulf does take an interest. It has been certainly my view, and the view of several of us in the European Union, that there is a larger issue here. It is not just the Gulf and anti-piracy; it is the Gulf and the

Horn of Africa. They have an historical link that long predates our presence there. It is a religious link, they are at trade, everything. So I think given the degree of our investment in the Horn, it is time we engaged the Gulf in a real serious political discussion. We use this word “transparency”, and indeed we are very open with what we do, so we would like to see some, if you will, reciprocal behaviour from the Gulf. There is heavy investment going from the Gulf. There is a lot of trade. We would like to engage them and say, “We are not exclusive by any means, but could we all see if we are on the same sheet of music regarding what our intentions are for this region?” Within that context is the piracy. The United Arab Emirates have in fact put up some money and have opened up the possibility that we should have a joint discussion with them—when I say we, I mean the European Union—about doing some things jointly regarding anti-piracy, and that is one of the purposes why I am going to go and spend two or three days there. But I want to emphasise the context is a much broader one, and I would like to engage them much more on that.

When I used the words “judicial means” I probably am not being sufficiently expert—I used the wrong word. What I mean quite simply is we need to conduct fast, deep, forensic, criminal investigations that are global about who is making money and using money to finance piracy. That is what I mean. I do not care what means are used, but the sooner we get hold of these people the better.

**Q190 Lord Jopling:** In an almost throw-away remark you said, if I caught you right, that Henry Bellingham is going to an anti-piracy conference—

**Alexander Rundos:** That is what I was told just outside by Nick Kay.

**Lord Jopling:** Did we know that?

**The Chairman:** I do not think that we know it. I am not aware that we know it.

**Lord Jopling:** It is news to me.

**Alexander Rundos:** I understood that there is to be representation from the UK.

**Q191 Lord Jopling:** You are going to it?

**Alexander Rondos:** I am going to it.

**Q192 Lord Jopling:** Who is convening it?

**Alexander Rondos:** The United Arab Emirates. It is within the context of the International Contact Group, I think, on piracy, and it is within that the UAE once or twice a year does a big conference.

**Lord Jopling:** Because that seems to be significant and we had not picked it up until now, so I think that is something we need to have a look at.

**The Chairman:** Indeed, yes.

**Q193 Baroness Eccles of Moulton:** Could I ask you about getting at the kingpins, which seems to be such an absolutely vital way of stopping the piracy more or less? The kingpins and financiers are obviously the same people in most things, and then there will be links right through until you get to these unfortunate young men actually on the boats. It makes one think of beggar masters and mafia and all sorts of not particularly closely related equivalents. It is a question of how much the pirates who are being held and prosecuted know about who the people are who are, as it were, their ultimate bosses, and to what extent that knowledge can be legitimately used and extracted. Maybe they do not know very much because there are so many stages in-between, but it seems to be a possible source of lead back to the root, as it were.

**Alexander Rondos:** Absolutely, and the people that are investigating are on to that already.

**Q194 Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury:** I am just interested by this press cutting we have about links between the mafia and Somali pirates that you are quoted as having been looking into. Is that the case?

**Alexander Rondos:** I just do not know. I am aware—

**Q195 Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury:** It says here you are looking into it.

**Alexander Rondos:** Yes, but we just find out—

**Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury:** It is just for the record.

**Alexander Rondos:** No, absolutely. There is a fellow based in Paris who did some research and claims that this occurs. But people better equipped than I need to go into our system and check and see. It is a neck of the woods that is so strange that anything is possible, but it also allows anyone with a lively imagination to concoct any type of conspiracy theory so we have to try and navigate in that one.

**Q196 Lord Inge:** You were talking about the new aid. What are you hoping to get out of it? Are any of the other Gulf states showing any real interest in it?

**Alexander Rondos:** They all have stated that they are interested. What I would like to get out of it, as I was mentioning earlier, is to establish a degree of, if you will, conversation with the much higher levels of leadership there and engage them in a discussion with us and the European Union on two or three key points about the Horn, about security, about some of the political relations that exist and then on things like anti-piracy.

Let me put it really quite bluntly. We have a tendency to say, “Well, if we go to the Gulf, the only thing we are going to do there is go and ask them for money”, and they do not take kindly to that. So there is a different conversation that needs to be had and the type of conversation I would like us to develop with them in the Gulf is to say, “We, the European Union and the west, are financing a very substantial military operation carried out by Africans to bring security to a region that actually brings security to the whole of the Gulf. In that context, therefore, could we not possibly see how we share some of the costs, or are we just going to foot this bill forever, and just be the nice people and someone else’s useful idiot?”, if I may put it crudely. That is the type of conversation I would like to have and just see where it takes us.



**Q197 Lord Inge:** If they were to volunteer to provide some of their capabilities, would you like that or not?

**Alexander Rondos:** Absolutely, why not if it is within the framework that we are all agreed?

**Q198 Lord Inge:** The reason I ask that question is because they get fed up with us asking them for money.

**Alexander Rondos:** Precisely, exactly, and there is no reason why we should not share the burden in all sorts of ways.

**The Chairman:** It is an interesting area of investigation.

**Q199 Lord Jopling:** Can I come back to the point that I raised first of all on the issue of the Gulf? Do you see any possibility of them helping with prosecuting and imprisoning?

**Alexander Rondos:** I think it is possible and it is one of the things I would like—

**Q200 Lord Jopling:** Because that would help enormously.

**Alexander Rondos:** I agree with you completely. We should pursue that further, and I think Qatar has already indicated that it would be open to a discussion, but I would like to see which other of the Emirates would also like to talk and whether the Saudis want to discuss the matter. I agree with you completely.

**Q201 The Chairman:** Do the Iranians take any interest in this area at all?

**Alexander Rondos:** You bet. It is fascinating. Let me put it this way; it is funny there are some issues—and anti-piracy is one—that brings strange groups of people together for a common purpose.

**Q202 The Chairman:** So we wait and listen. Good, okay.

**Alexander Rondos:** It is very interesting. If I were a pirate I would not want to be caught by the Iranians, judging from the recent record of Iranian reaction to pirates.

**Q203 Lord Williams of Elvel:** I have a very quick question on this operation against a pirate base. Does this mark a fundamental change in policy? In other words, will there be

repeated attacks and, if so, what is the legality for these operations? What would the reaction of the neighbouring countries be?

**Alexander Rondos:** They could be repeated because the legal basis upon which this latest attack occurred was the member states of the EU reviewed and came up with a clear set of rules of engagement and authority and what is “go” and “no go” for the operational commander. The case has been made that there is a way in which—or rather the instruction is clear legally, and that is mandated by the Council of the European Union, so that is the legal basis. But within that context they have been told that they are authorised to go after these dumps from which the pirates operate and to make sure that absolutely every measure is taken to avoid civilian loss of life.

It is entirely up to the operational commander from now on if he chooses to launch another assault, and it all depends on the season as well, but it is entirely up to him. So there may be others, and I will not know—or will only know hours before—if he chooses to do that. But we are entering into the rainy season, which makes it more complicated. I hope I have addressed the legality—

**Q204 The Chairman:** Sorry, could I just check on this because clearly we are not in the 19th century any more and Europe cannot decide it is just going to intervene on the territorial integrity of African states. Presumably, there is a UN background to this.

**Alexander Rondos:** Yes, absolutely. With the Somali Government, for example, the coastal states were asked to offer their approval and action would not have been taken without that, and that was a precondition for actually being able to proceed with the operation. Yes, thank you for correcting me.

**Q205 Lord Williams of Elvel:** The views of the surrounding—

**Alexander Rondos:** The reactions I have received—the official reaction—has been satisfactory. They may not want to state it publicly, but they are delighted. This is a scourge

and I can well understand there is no need to make a noise about it, but they have communicated their satisfaction.

**Q206 Lord Inge:** How effective do you think the European Union training mission to Somalia has been, and how are the preparations that you get notice of progressing?

**Alexander Rondos:** By the training mission you mean what we do in Uganda where we train the EUTM? My assessment is that it has been very good. Why? First of all, we have been able to identify, or find a way of identifying the right types of recruit. That was when an early lesson was learned so it is not just purely a clan-based affair; there is a spread from around the country from different clans brought together. Secondly, taking them away to Uganda means that they have been given, my military colleagues assure me, a first-rate training. Thirdly, these people—

**Q207 Lord Inge:** Sorry, can I just interrupt, did they come from throughout Somalia, or do you take the southern ones and northern ones or what?

**Alexander Rondos:** Throughout, with the exception of Somaliland, but the attempt is constantly to mix from different clans. That is what becomes important because if you do not do that, what you end up doing is training people who are clan based who at any time can become another clan militia. The object is to try to create—

**Lord Inge:** Whereas in the British Army we do actually base it on clans.

**Alexander Rondos:** But somehow the regimental system—

**Q208 Lord Inge:** I know it is slightly different, but behind that is a serious question because mixing them sounds easy on paper but how easy is it in practice?

**Alexander Rondos:** It is not easy. The idea behind it is if a Somali national army is needed, the structure of command especially in the officer corps is going to have to be one that is able to reach beyond pure clan-based interests. That has been the thinking behind it and in fact this training mission now is increasingly going to focus on the middle-ranking officer

training. It has been very effective. The challenge is the following: by the end of, say, next year, 3,000 or 4,000 people will have been trained. That maketh not a national army, so the debate that goes on that we are all engaged in is: what then is the broader programme for security sector reform? Are we creating an army? Are we trying to create a national gendarmerie? What is it that is needed, and who is going to invest in this?

**Q209 Lord Inge:** What have we lain down at the moment is the basic role of an army?

**Alexander Rondos:** To protect the frontiers and to protect the country from attack. That is what it is.

**Q210 Lord Inge:** External attack? Nothing to do with internally at all?

**Alexander Rondos:** No, and yet they are involved in attack right now because they are attacking Shabelle. They are operating alongside the AMISOM forces.

If I may, you asked me about the other programme, EUCAP Nestor. My hope is this is going to get off the ground fast. Again, I want to go back to what we were talking about earlier, I think there is a need for a conversation with the Gulf countries, who have a vital interest in the success of this. The maritime security of Somalia is of vital interest to them. They are willing to invest, and they want to do something jointly and we need to take that a step further.

**Q211 Lord Inge:** Are you talking about investment, or what are you talking about as far as the Gulf states are concerned?

**Alexander Rondos:** It is not clear. They have already indicated—

**Q212 Lord Inge:** You say “they”. They all have, have they?

**Alexander Rondos:** I am talking about the UAE. The UAE has expressed an interest in working together. We are providing what we refer to as capacity building—in other words, we are providing skills or training for skills. Sooner or later someone is going to have to provide the kit to do this, and therein lies the issue, and that is where we need to broaden

the discussion out in my view, because only when we have achieved that can we really talk about an exit strategy for Atalanta and we will have begun to truly police the coastline effectively.

**Lord Inge:** That is quite a big task.

**Alexander Rondos:** Very big. I agree with you entirely.

**Q213 Baroness Henig:** I have a number of questions. The first one actually relates to your appointment. I see in the first instance you were appointed for six months. I am assuming that will be renewed at the end of June since that comes to an end quite soon.

**Alexander Rondos:** I was not going to come here for a farewell visit, no.

**Q214 Baroness Henig:** So how is that working then? You are appointed for six months in the first instance—

**Alexander Rondos:** Yes, and then it is renewed for a year, and it has been—

**Q215 Baroness Henig:** So it has just been renewed for a year, and then—

**Alexander Rondos:** Yes as of 1 July it starts again for a year.

**Q216 Baroness Henig:** Is it a rolling year or—

**Alexander Rondos:** Yes.

**Q217 Baroness Henig:** So it will continue?

**Alexander Rondos:** Yes, unless the member states choose to discontinue me at any point.

**Q218 Baroness Henig:** Clearly, in practice you describe yourself as an envoy, from which I take it that your concept of this is that you will be based out there for most of the time rather than in Brussels or Athens? How do you see the way you operate in practice?

**Alexander Rondos:** I will, I think, spend at least half of my time if not more—that is what I have been doing already—in the region. Part of my task is also to do exactly what I am doing today—and I consider it a fundamental obligation—which is to come to the member states and the Parliaments and the like and explain what this is. After all it is you all, and in every

other country, who are voting serious funds and otherwise endorsing what we do. So I regard it as my obligation also to come back and report. That takes up a good deal of time, and then I have to be in Brussels, which I am still discovering—that is the only way I can put it.

**Baroness Henig:** That takes time as well, I would think, yes.

**Alexander Rondos:** I am not sure I will ever learn entirely, but it is complicated.

**Q219 Baroness Henig:** In terms of support, are you quite happy so far? I think you are absolutely right that you need to go around the member countries and that is a way of making sure you do get support. What do you need to be effective in this role? Do you have everything at the moment that you need from the member states, or is there more that you need?

**Alexander Rondos:** One could always want more of everything. No, I am perfectly content because I have taken the view that I want to be very targeted in the sense that there is no point in me interfering in operation issues. What I have to make sure of is—there is a regional issue here. Somalia is a regional issue, so very few people are given the authority to try to stitch the region together, and the fundamental question I am asking myself is: in this region that is marred by multiple flash-points, which become very ugly very quickly, can we eventually start thinking of how we build an architecture for security so these countries can find ways of avoiding coming to blows? Right now we have invasions on order and at will occurring—incursions occur all over the place. This is the Balkans in 1992, let me put it that way. So my task is to start doing more and more with, if you like, the shuttling that can begin to bring people together. The support I need is more the access to be able to talk at the right levels in the member states so that everyone understands what it is I think needs to be done and what my recommendations are. I keep a very small team, and that is the way I prefer to do it, so I prefer to have a tight little ship that can move fast.

**Baroness Henig:** Yes, and yours is very much a strategic role then. That is how you are seeing it. Thank you.

**Q220 The Chairman:** How do you feel you interact with the External Action Service and the heads of mission in some of the states that you cover? Is that straightforward or how do you use their own expertise? How does that work?

**Alexander Rondos:** Absolutely. I draw on them because they have a lot of expertise that is local. They have all been very welcoming because in many ways I can do certain things that are very difficult. They are bound by the boundaries within which they operate, not so much bureaucratically but geographically; I am able to move and, if you will, connect certain dots that help—for example, someone in Nairobi dealing with Addis Ababa and talking to the leadership of both countries.

**Q221 The Chairman:** How many heads of mission are in your patch, Mr Rondos? Just to give us an idea.

**Alexander Rondos:** Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia. Six.

**Q222 The Chairman:** Are you anticipating having your own office out there at all?

**Alexander Rondos:** Yes, precisely because of the relative flexibility we have, and frankly at a little bit of my insistence that we have to fly the flag in Mogadishu, I have been asked if I, as the EU Special Representative, will open an office in Mogadishu so that is beginning as we speak. I received the authorisation from the member states to do that, and a modest budget, so I will have always two to three people in Mogadishu. That way we will be the eyes and ears, and hopefully the ones who are talking to the system in Somalia as well as working with AMISOM and the others.

**Q223 Baroness Eccles of Moulton:** Could I ask: how does that link up with flak jackets and armoured vehicles? You must have to have a very secure establishment and that is costly.

**Alexander Rondos:** Absolutely, yes. My budget was just approved a few days ago on that.

**Q224 Baroness Eccles of Moulton:** You likened what is happening now in Somalia to the Balkans in 1992, does that mean there is some ethnic cleansing going on?

**Alexander Rondos:** No. I was using the analogy in a different way. It is more a broader region I am talking about. Look at Sudan. Right now we have fighting going on somewhere in the middle of Sudan. With Eritrea and Ethiopia, there are daily hostilities on the frontier up there; in Somalia, there is actually a campaign, with daily fighting. That could easily be broken down to endless separate little battles, but those are more under control. But if you sit back and look at this picture, this region is a series of flash-points and we are held hostage by each one of them. That is where I liken it a bit to the Balkans. Every time someone decides to cause trouble we just become transfixed by that and are sucked into this particular issue without sitting back and saying, “Is there a broader framework we can put to, if you will, herd the cats?” It is not easy.

**Q225 Baroness Eccles of Moulton:** Is this clan versus clan, is it?

**Alexander Rondos:** In the case within Somalia it tends to be that, but then al-Shabaab puts the Jihadist overlay on it. So it is not entirely just clan versus clan; it is the marginalised who have turned to a Jihadi agenda. It is very mixed. But in the broader region it is your classic frontier disputes between cattle rustlers and who controls a bit of land. It is irredentism—that is the elephant in the room in the whole of the Horn of Africa, and that is why Kenya and Ethiopia are very intrusive because they have very large Somali minorities on the Ogaden and in the northern territories of Kenya. So there are various causes.

**Q226 Lord Foulkes of Cumnock:** You said you were planning some recommendations about what needs to be done. I wanted to look at the root causes of the problem. These kingpins, as you described them, for their muscle they get these unemployed young people from Somalia; they get unemployed fishermen for their navigational skills who know the sea.



You have described Somalia's economy as improving. We need to look at some targeted programmes for unemployed youngsters or fishermen who are going to be recruited to do this. Are you going to be looking at that?

**Alexander Rondos:** Absolutely, it has already begun. The challenge is access. The ideas are there and the programmes can be done, but the issue is this. In an ideal world, you could say we are going to take some money and we are going to risk it. We are going to send it to those coastal communities that we cannot even visit, and therefore we cannot be sure we can account for the money. If I were a private sector risk investor for the promotion of the coastal communities, I would say I am going to take 3% of my annual turnover and I am going to risk it. I would do it that way, just to check. This is the real challenge because the auditors will come and they will say, "Can you prove how your money has been spent?" That is what blocks the system.

**Q227 Lord Foulkes of Cumnock:** How much is IGAD involved in this kind of planning?

**Alexander Rondos:** To a certain extent one of my conclusions reached after my first few months is that actually we need as EU to engage more with IGAD and help give them more capacity. If we are working on the assumption the best structures for the whole of Africa are regional organisations, this is the sum of how you build up security. You have ECOWAS in the west and you have the East African Community. IGAD should begin to play that role in that part of the Horn. I think there is ample room to do more and for the countries to pitch in and accept a wider role.

**Q228 Lord Foulkes of Cumnock:** If we come out with a report suggesting specifics in relation to that, would it be helpful in strengthening your arm for help?

**Alexander Rondos:** Absolutely, yes. Please, emphasise stabilisation: let us wake up and get going on stabilisation generally in Somalia. In the next 18 months, even where access is difficult and you cannot do the very long term programmes, there is a gap between end of

conflict and the ability to install serious development programmes. You have to fill that space fast. That is first. Secondly, the coastal communities are critical. Thirdly, what is the structure regionally that can become the catalyst, if not the engine, for bringing people together—to be the forum, as it were, where serious thinking politics but also programmes can occur? Please, I would welcome it.

**Q229 Baroness Young of Hornsey:** Your comments on that interest me. My question is mainly about EU development and the humanitarian aid, but you talked just now about this gap between the end of conflict and the next phase. Do you think the EU aid as it is currently set up is able to fill that gap? Is there something you can see in the future that would work to ensure that transition period is effective?

**Alexander Rondos:** I think we are bound in the EU by all sorts of rules and so I want to be very clear about that. The staff of the EU that I see in the field I think would be happy to plunge into all sorts of programmes, but it is their necks—not physically, but professionally—that are on the line because people then ask, “Through whom do you give the money, how can you account for it?” That is one. Having said that, I think there is a much broader question that applies certainly to the EU, and I have discussed it with colleagues here in Britain. We have a lot of cases around the world where we now need to start understanding what you do when conflict ends. Which is the best way of doing it? I am not sure we have the answers yet. There is too much theology and not enough practice going on at the moment. Right now we are fighting a war, which we are possibly winning and, by golly, we need to consolidate that victory and we have no time to sit and have seminars. That is the issue.

Who are the types of agencies? This gets you into very interesting territory. There is the United Nations, which does a lot because we as the EU are really non-operational. We finance others—it is very important to bear that in mind. So we finance a lot to the UN. I

think it is time to talk to the UN a bit about how in certain circumstances they can move with an alacrity that is equal to the occasion. That I think might be needed.

There is a wide array of NGOs who do very good work but very often you cannot go and supervise. An NGO does not have an interest in making a mess of a programme. If they do, it is because politically something went wrong. I would be more liberal in my attitude to that and be willing to take the risk.

We then come into a very interesting issue, especially in Somalia. Unlike in other parts of the world—I take a place like Ethiopia 20 or 25 years ago, when I worked in NGOs there; it was the domain of all the Christian NGOs because it was a Christian country—we are in Somalia, which is Muslim. In areas where al-Shabaab controlled, they do not want to see the Christians at all. The only agencies that have access are Muslim NGOs. If you are looking at it completely objectively and you say, “How can we reach people who are in need?” then you get together with the Muslim NGOs and you finance them. It is as simple as that. But they are not part of the traditional systems that you are all accustomed to here. So I think there is another very interesting discussion to be had with all these agencies that belong to countries that are part of the Organisation of Islamic Conferences and the like, some of which are very good. What I would like to see is them talking more with our NGOs and the like, because the reality is now, in Somalia, access is in the hands of countries like Turkey and NGOs that come from the Muslim world. It is as simple as that.

**Q230 Baroness Young of Hornsey:** That is very interesting and points to the need for more imagination, flexibility, putting aside some cultural baggage and so on in order to effect that change. Just going on to talk about how successful the EU development and humanitarian aid has been in Somalia and how that has been disbursed, I wonder if you could give us your views on that and perhaps say a little bit about how you think that success has

been measured? Also, in view of your last comments, might there need to be some different way of thinking about what success looks like? Sorry, that is a big barrage of questions.

**Alexander Rondos:** Yes, I know. There is a very interesting issue, very broadly at the moment, before I get to the specific question. The EU, for the first time—unlike, say, what you are accustomed to here in Britain—is getting used to the idea that it is doing diplomacy, defence and development. The system is still getting used to that, and it is both conceptual and political. How do we avoid the gears grinding and getting the machinery of the EU to understand how you synchronise and plan all these things together? That is the very broad context because that then raises questions about what is development, where is the humanitarian, and what are the various options. Now, specifically on the humanitarian and developmental, my own view is it is very good. It is effective and they choose good partners. I think what often frustrates the EU officials themselves is that they would love to be able to move more quickly but the rules are that things have to be very carefully planned, and all the rest of it, for reasons of accountability. So, yes, when a programme is up and running, on the whole, it is really rather good.

On the humanitarian stuff, I have to take my hat off to the people at ECHO, which is the EU humanitarian organisation. Last year with the famine they were streets ahead of everyone. They predicted it, they pre-positioned stuff and they saved an awful lot of lives under very difficult circumstances but the system stretched.

As a concluding comment on this, we are talking about Somalia, but right now Sudan risks imploding with all the human consequences there and we have the Sahel that has suddenly just erupted. So there is a real stretch that is beginning to occur and I think it affects many countries but certainly the EU as a triage. There is a limited pot of money and suddenly there are new sets of problems and those problems have to be addressed, not just in a humanitarian and developmental way, but also there are security issues. The money that is

provided to the EU, for instance, for what is known as the Africa Peace Facility, which is what finances AMISOM and the fighting there, is development money. Working on the proposition that you do not have development without security, therefore let us get the security done. There is a real stretch right now both in terms of personnel and on resources.

**Q231 The Chairman:** Finally, just to tie up a few loose ends—I am aware of the time—I have a factual question on co-ordination between the EU and the UNDP rule of law and security programme. Does that co-ordinate well? I know Lord Jopling was keen to follow up something you might have heard on the previous session that was around the firearms on vessels now and why this is a UK issue in terms of legality. I do not know whether you have any idea as to whether this is a common problem among other EU nations in the area. That may not be an area you are aware of.

Lastly, coming back to Atalanta, I want to ask about the mission ending in 2014. This has been rolled over several times before, but does the piracy industry out there have it as a red letter date when that mission finishes. Do they think that we will put the investment in then, or is there an assumption that it will just continue? I suppose having done a report recently on the Afghan police mission, we just really had the impression that the mission there was going to have a huge problem just because everybody knew the military end date was at a particular time. I do not know whether you feel that is reflected in this or not.

**Alexander Rondos:** Let me start on the last first. In one form or another there will be anti-piracy operations that will go on so long as there are pirates around. I think it is as simple as that. Whether it is the EU or whatever, that will continue.

**Q232 The Chairman:** Everybody knows that?

**Alexander Rondos:** Yes.

**Q233 The Chairman:** Fine, let us leave that at that.

**Alexander Rondos:** Secondly, on firearms on vessels, different countries seem to react very differently. A lot of this requires legislation. In some countries there is the request that actually formal armed forces are put on. In Germany, if I am right, this was raised recently by some of the industry there. The German Government obviously objected so you have different variants of the issue, but what is clear is that the presence of trained armed men on the boats has proven quite a successful deterrent and so long as piracy is a threat in that area, it is a practice that is encouraged.

EU, UNDP, on that particular programme that you mentioned, we think it is good and in fact I would like to see it expanded. It is very effective and it is going to be key in Somalia.

**Q234 The Chairman:** As we said in the previous evidence session, this co-ordination of work among member states, the EU and others is very important to us. Would you agree with the comments from the previous witnesses—forgive me, it has just gone completely out of my mind for some reason, but I think that they were from DFID—that this all works well?

**Alexander Rondos:** Yes, let us be clear. People can become co-ordination fetishists and they spend more time having coffees and meetings as opposed to getting the job done. So we have to be quite serious, I think, here. What I do agree with is what Nick Kay was saying, and I feel very strongly on that. I do not call it co-ordination; we are actually involved in the joint management of responsibilities here and it is on the ground. What is needed now is more people in Mogadishu getting together there and dealing with a lot of hard operational issues that require real close co-operation, synchronisation and whatever else. That is the issue. Whether that is over politics or over how money is spent or how the stabilisation programme is done, I think it is the people on the coalface who need to be encouraged just to be doing much more together. The way we judge who should be involved in the co-ordination is not simply because you exist; it is by what you do. It is as simple as that.

**The Chairman:** Mr Rondos, thank you very much indeed for joining us. We all look forward to seeing you out in Mogadishu when we can come out there ourselves and enjoy the vibrancy of the cityscape that is clearly there that you described so well. We wish you every success. Thank you very much indeed for being a part of our session.

**Alexander Rondos:** You are welcome, any time. Thank you very much for having me.