

## **EUROPEAN UNION NAVAL FORCE OPERATION ATALANTA (EU NAVFOR ATALANTA) IN THE INDIAN OCEAN AND THE GULF OF ADEN**

The EU NAVFOR Atalanta was launched in support of Resolutions 1814 (2008), 1816 (2008), 1838 (2008) and 1846 (2008) of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), aiming at the deterrence, prevention and repression of acts of piracy and armed robbery off the Somali coast and the Gulf of Aden. On December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2008, the Council of EU adopted a political decision to launch the operation, currently extended until December 2012.

The political objective of the operation is to contribute to improving maritime security in the region. The political-military objective is repression of acts of piracy and armed robbery and protection of humanitarian aid by means of escorting vessels of the United Nations World Food Programme (UNWFP) and other endangered vessels to their ports of destination. The tasks of the operation are as follows:

The protection of vessels of the WFP delivering food aid to displaced persons in Somalia;

The protection of vulnerable vessels cruising in the Gulf of Aden and off the Somali coast.

Taking the necessary measures, including use of force, in order to deter, prevent and interfere, so that acts of piracy and armed robbery may be ended;

The theatre of operation comprises an area of 2.4 million square nautical miles and 6,500 nautical miles of coastline, extended with the waters of the Republic of Seychelles.

A 490 nautical miles long transit corridor has been set up for merchant vessels, where they receive EU escort. Owners and operators who have vessels transiting the region are strongly encouraged to register their movements on the Maritime Security Centre – Horn of Africa, coordinated with the EU Combined Joint Operations Centre. By the end of 2009 the military ships participating in the operation have escorted more than 280,000 tons of UN food deliveries.

Atalanta's Operational Headquarters is located in Northwood, UK, staffed with 110 personnel. The Force Headquarters is located onboard the Flagship, in the theatre of operation (staffed with 30 personnel). The countries currently participating in the operation are Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Spain and Sweden, as well as non EU Member States (Norway). Other countries providing military staff to work at the Operational Headquarters are Cyprus, Ireland, Malta and Finland.

By means of CM Decision of May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2009, the Council of Ministers authorised the participation at the Operational Headquarters in Northwood, UK, of up to two military personnel, in compliance with which one Bulgarian officer has been occupying a position at the OHQ since August 2009.

More information about the operation is available at: <http://www.eunavfor.eu/>