

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3269/09
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to the Commission

Subject: Combating piracy

On 11 April 2009, the Italian deep-sea tug, *Buccaneer*, was hijacked in the Gulf of Aden, off Somalia, by a gang of Somali pirates comprising some twenty former fishermen from the Warsangeli clan. It was then moved and anchored off the Puntland coast. The tug, whose 16-man crew have been taken hostage, is now moored 12 km east of Las Qoray, as are the two barges it was towing, two Egyptian fishing boats and other vessels.

Military action by the *Atalanta* mission, the first mission conducted by the EU against piracy, is unlikely while negotiations are taking place between the hijackers and the authorities in the semi-autonomous region of Puntland. The Italian Navy frigate *Maestrale* is taking part in the *Atalanta* mission.

Parliament issued a warning about the criminal attacks on shipping occurring frequently off Somalia and the Horn of Africa, in its resolution P6_TA(2008)0519 of 23 October 2008. These attacks endanger the lives of the crew and threaten the safety of international trade. Parliament has proposed that piracy be declared a 'criminal act' under international law and has called on the Commission to initiate actions preventing illegal activities at sea.

Moreover, the EU has embarked upon a military coordination action (EU NAVCO), under Council Joint Action 2008/749/CFSP¹ of 19 September 2008, in support of UN Security Council Resolution 1816(2008) of 2 June 2008 on the situation in Somalia.

What steps does the Commission intend taking to bring these acts of maritime piracy to an end?

¹ OJ L 252, 20.9.2008, p. 39.