

EN

E-002643/2021

Answer given by Ms Johansson
on behalf of the European Commission
(12.8.2021)

The main task of Operation IRINI is to ensure the implementation of the arms embargo on Libya. Operation IRINI's maritime assets are mostly deployed in the eastern part of its Area of Operation, where violations of the arms embargo mainly occur, and received information on the incident from the Italian Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre after the event. At the time of the incident, the closest Operation IRINI navy asset was more than 300 nautical miles away and the closest air asset was 180 nautical miles away from the incident area.

Any information regarding distress situations at sea is shared by Operation IRINI air assets with all competent Maritime Rescue Coordination Centres in the area in accordance with the International Conventions for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) and on Maritime Search and Rescue. The operational coordination of search and rescue operations is a national responsibility, with no operational involvement of the Commission.

The shipwreck in question occurred on 21-22 April 2021, the Libyan, Italian and Maltese Rescue Coordination Centres were informed by a European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) plane about a boat in distress and the Libyan Coast Guard assumed the coordination of the rescue operation and searched for it in the area of sighting. Ocean Viking and three commercial vessels were diverted by the Italian Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre to render assistance, and a second Frontex plane was deployed to accelerate the search.

The Italian and Maltese authorities had no assets in the proximity of the event. Ultimately, given the extremely adverse weather conditions, no ship was able to arrive on time.