

Our internal ref. OMD/OPC/2024  
Your ref. Ares(2024)3139830

**Mr Henrik Nielsen**

Director of Directorate B  
Schengen, Borders & Visa  
DG HOME, European Commission

Dear Mr Nielsen,

In reference to your inquiry, please see below the necessary elements for a concise reply to the written question [E-001179/2024] submitted by MEP Özlem Demirel:

**1. *How many MAS operations took place in 2023 and 2024, and how many flight hours have been flown in this connection by airplanes and drones from contractors such as Airbus or DEA?***

Under the general concept of MAS, Frontex Surveillance Aircraft (FSA) has performed the following flight activities:

- 2023: 1711 FSA flights (1468 flights / 7774 flight hours by manned aircraft and 243 flights / 3307 flight hours by unmanned aircraft).
- January 2024 - April 2024: 456 FSA flights (364 flights / 1700 flight hours by manned aircraft and 92 flights / 1220 flight hours by unmanned aircraft).

**2. *In which host countries have those operations taken place, in which of those countries have manned aircraft been used, and in which of them have unmanned aircraft been used?***

In the reference period (January 2023 - April 2024), Frontex Surveillance Aircraft has been deployed in support of the following Member States:

- Belgium (Joint Operation Opal Coast and under EUROSUR framework, manned aircraft)
- France (Joint Operation Opal Coast, manned aircraft)
- Greece (under EUROSUR framework, unmanned aircraft)
- Italy (Joint Operation Themis and under EUROSUR framework, manned aircraft)
- Malta (under EUROSUR framework, manned and unmanned aircraft)
- Romania (Joint Operation Terra/ Joint Operation Romania, manned aircraft)
- Spain (Joint Operation Indalo, manned aircraft)

**3. How many sea rescue cases were reported during Frontex MAS airplane and drone operations in 2022, how many have been reported in 2023, and how many mayday alerts have been issued?**

Frontex Surveillance Aircraft has performed the following activity:

- 2022: a total of 771 cases (one or multiple detections / updates) regarding vessels in a state of emergency (570 cases detected by the manned aircraft and 201 by the unmanned aircraft). These incidents include 56 cases in which mayday relay alerts were issued.
- 2023: a total of 1204 cases (one or multiple detections / updates) regarding vessels in a state of emergency (1004 cases detected by the manned aircraft and 200 by the unmanned aircraft). These incidents include 191 cases in which mayday relay alerts were issued.

In line with the international Search and Rescue (SAR) legal framework and EU Regulations, Frontex transmitted all information about these sightings to the relevant Rescue Coordination Centres (RCCs), responsible for evaluating the gravity of each case, the phase of the emergency and determining the required response. Frontex is not responsible for the coordination of SAR operations, as the decision on the scale and type of SAR response lies exclusively with the RCCs.

Yours sincerely,

*Electronically signed*

**Hans Leijtens**  
Executive Director