



European Union Naval Force Somalia Operation Atalanta

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Mission

The European Union is concerned with the effect of Somali-based piracy and armed robbery at sea off the Horn of Africa and in the Western Indian Ocean. Somali piracy is characterised by criminals taking control of vessels transiting the High Risk Areas in the Region and extorting ransom money for the crew, the vessel and cargo; this bearing all features of organised crime. Crews held hostage by pirates often face a prolonged period of captivity, the average being 5 months (145 days) but some hostages have been held for more than two years and eight months (1001 days). Moreover, piracy impacts on international trade and maritime security and on the economic activities and security of countries in the region.

As a result, and as part of the Comprehensive Approach to Somalia, in December 2008 the EU launched the

European Union Naval Force (EU NAVFOR) Somalia – Operation Atalanta

within the framework of the European Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and in accordance with relevant [UN Security Council Resolutions \(UNSCR\)](#) and International Law in response to the rising levels of piracy and armed robbery off the Horn of Africa and in the Western Indian Ocean

Operation Atalanta is the European Union's counter-piracy operation off the coast of Somalia.

Mandate

Under the EU Council Joint Action, which is based on UN resolutions, EU NAVFOR's mandate is to:

- protect [World Food Programme \(WFP\)](#) vessels delivering aid to displaced persons in Somalia, and [African Union Mission on Somalia \(AMISOM\)](#) shipping.
- deter, prevent and repress acts of piracy and armed robbery at sea off the Somali coast.
- protect vulnerable shipping off the Somali coast on a case by case basis.
- In addition, the EU NAVFOR also contributes to the monitoring of fishing activities off the coast of Somalia.

On 23 March 2012 the Council of the EU extended the [Mandate of Operation Atalanta](#) until December 2014.



FACTS AND FIGURES

Area of Operation: Southern Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and Western Indian Ocean, This is an area approximately 1.5 times the size of mainland Europe.

Headquarters: Northwood (near London), United Kingdom

Starting date: December 2008

Operation Commander: Rear Admiral Bob Tarrant

Troop strength: The composition of EU NAVFOR changes constantly due to the frequent rotation of units and varies according to size of warships. However, it typically comprises of approximately 1200 personnel, 4 – 7 warships and 2 – 4 Maritime Patrol and Reconnaissance Aircraft. For currently deployed units, please see the EU Naval Force website.

Operation budget: Military assets and personnel are provided by the contributing states with the running costs and personnel costs being met on a national basis. In addition, there is a common budget of EUR 14.9 million for 2013 and 2014 agreed and monitored by the Athena Committee of Member States.

Contributing states: Currently 21 EU Member states and 3 non-EU countries contribute to Operation Atalanta.

The EU Naval Force has made a significant contribution to the reduction in piracy: In 2011, 174 merchant vessels were attacked and 25 ships pirated with 736 seafarers held hostage. In 2013, 7 ships have been attacked, none pirated. So far in 2014 two ships have been attacked. Still, 50 crew members remain in captivity.

“Despite the reduction in piracy, recent attacks demonstrate that there is still a clear and present danger from pirates off the Somali coast. It is crucial that naval counter-piracy forces maintain pressure on these criminals and that the maritime industry remains vigilant, taking appropriate precautions to deter an attack.” (Rear Admiral Bob Tarrant)

For more key facts and figures, please visit the EU NAVFOR website.



The EU Comprehensive Approach against piracy in the Horn of Africa

EU NAVFOR is one part of the EU's "Comprehensive Approach", tackling both current symptoms and root causes of the problem. Together, EU NAVFOR, EUCAP Nestor and the EU Training Mission Somalia (EUTM Somalia) form a coherent, integrated CSDP package supporting the EU's "Strategic Framework for the Horn of Africa", which guides the EU's multi-faceted engagement in the Horn of Africa.

Judicial international cooperation to end impunity

Piracy has to be understood as organised criminal activity occurring at sea. It is organised on land, with kidnapping crews and ships for ransom as the business model. Prosecution of piracy suspects is a key component of the overall fight against piracy. The EU Naval Force seeks, where possible, a legal finish. Transfers of suspect pirates for trial to competent authorities remain necessary to put an end to impunity in the Indian Ocean.

The EU naval Force provides Interpol with relevant information on Somali based piracy. Moreover, the EU is actively supporting the establishment of a co-operation mechanism among the prosecutors of the countries concerned.



The European Union's **Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)** includes the gradual framing of a common defence policy which might in time lead to a common defence. The CSDP allows the Union to develop its civilian and military capacities for crisis management and conflict prevention at international level, thus helping to maintain peace and international security, in accordance with the United Nations Charter. The CSDP includes a strong conflict prevention component.

Based in Brussels, the **Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability (CPCC)** is the permanent structure responsible for an autonomous operational conduct of civilian CSDP operations. Under the political control and strategic direction of the Political and Security Committee and the overall authority of the High Representative, the CPCC ensures the effective planning and conduct of civilian CSDP crisis management operations, as well as the proper implementation of all mission-related tasks.

More information and background documents available on <http://www.eeas.europa.eu/csdp> and eeas.europa.eu