



## HEADQUARTERS, ALLIED MARITIME COMMAND

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### MONTHLY NEWSLETTER NATO MARCOM APRIL 2019

NATO MARCOM continues training and operational activities with Exercise DYNAMIC MANTA 2019, an antisubmarine exercise in the Mediterranean Sea, and the second Focused Operation of the year (FOCOPS 19-2) under Operation Sea Guardian (OSG).

#### Maritime Security Operations

During March, 73 warships from France, Turkey, Spain, Greece, Portugal, Netherlands, United Kingdom, Germany, Canada and Albania took part in OSG, providing support in various roles in the Mediterranean. Additionally, NATO Airborne Early Warning (AEW) and Maritime Patrol Aircraft (MPA) conducted 217 flights in support of OSG. AEW flights were provided by NATO's own assets while the MPA flights were provided by Greece, Spain, Italy, Turkey, France and USA. Submarines under NATO and national operational command also provided critical support to OSG. Commencing 30 March, FOCOPS 19-2 has been taking place in the Eastern and Central Mediterranean led by the Turkish Navy onboard TCG Kemalreis, and supported by various submarine and air assets.

Overall, OSG is enhancing NATO Maritime Situational Awareness (MSA) in the Mediterranean, increasing the Alliance's knowledge of the Maritime Pattern of Life (MPoL), and detecting anomalies to counter terrorism. A total of 339 MV were hailed by NATO during March.

#### Standing NATO Maritime Groups

New units have joined Standing NATO Maritime Group 1 (SNMG-1) led by USS Gravely (DDG 107): the Polish frigate ORP General Kazimerz Pulaski, the German auxiliary ship FGS Spessart, the British frigate HMS Westminster, the Danish frigate HDMS Absalon, the Spanish frigate ESPS Almirante Juan De Borbón, the German Auxiliary FGS Rhön and the Turkish frigate TCG Gokova. This powerful force sailed the North Sea and crossed the Channel carrying out an intense program of training activities and MSA tasks. The group visited Rostock (Germany), Plymouth (UK) and Glasgow (UK). The group had interaction with SNMCMG-1 for several days and shared training activities.

Standing NATO Maritime Group 2 (SNMG-2) Tactical Unit 1 (TU 01) continues operations in support of the EU, Greece and Turkey's efforts to control migration in the Aegean Sea. SNMG-2 TU 01 is commanded from the German frigate FGS Bonn and consists of the Albanian patrol vessel ALS Butrinti, the Turkish warship TCG Karsiyaka (relieving TCG Kusadasi) and the

Greek patrol vessels HS Polesmistis, HS Blesas and HS Nikiforos (relieving HS Starakis and HS Armatolos). Nine immigrant boats were sighted in the Aegean in March and, consequently, their movements were reported to local authorities for further action, as established.

SNMG-2 Tactical Unit 2 (TU 02) is commanded by the Dutch frigate HNLMS Evertsen, with the Canadian frigate HMCS Toronto, the Spanish frigate ESPS Santa Maria, and the Turkish frigate TCG Yildrom (relieving TCG Gelibolu). The Romanian frigate ROS Regele Ferdinand and the Bulgarian frigate BGS Drazki recently joined the group. TU 02 completed exercise DYNAMIC MANTA and sailed to the Eastern Mediterranean and the Aegean Sea to execute operational training and MSA tasks. They visited Catania (Italy) and Aksaz (Turkey) en route.

Standing NATO Mine Counter Measures Group 1 (SNMCMG-1) continues under Danish command executed from the Mine Countermeasure Vessel (MCMV) HDMS Thetis, with the German minehunter FGS Diilingen, the British minehunter HMS Cattistock, and the Norwegian minehunter HNOMS Hinnoy that joined the group in March. The Belgian minehunter BMS Bellis and the German minehunter FGS Homburg left the group in March. The group sailed through the English Channel performing counter mine training and operation HOD (historical bomb and mine disposal) in French waters. The group then transited to the Western coast of Britain and visited Plymouth, Liverpool and Glasgow. As part of their training program, the warships carried out several exercises with SNMG-1.

SNMCMG-2, led from the German MCMV FGS Werra with the Turkish mine counter vessel TCG Akcakoca, the Bulgarian BGS Tsibar and the Romanian ROS Lupu Dinescu, carried out operational training and MSA tasks in the Black Sea taking part in Exercise POSEIDON. The Spanish minehunter ESP Tajo was incorporated into the Group and the Italian minehunter ITS Termoli joined the Group for a few weeks in March, participating in several training activities. After Exercise Poseidon the mine counter vessels left the Black Sea and visited Souda Bay in Crete (Greece) and participated in Exercise Ariadne in the Eastern Mediterranean. Most units were dispersed after the exercise and the Group headed west to reach Cagliari in late March.



*Units exercising in DYNAMIC MANTA 2019*

## **MARCOM exercises**

MARCOM executed Exercise DYNAMIC MANTA 2019 in February/March under the control of Commander Submarines NATO (COMSUBNATO), achieving all training objectives.

MARCOM is now planning Exercise TRIDENT JUPITER 19-1, scheduled for the second semester of the year.

## **MARCOM engagements**

MARCOM hosted the Allied Fleet Commanders Conference from 26-27 March. The conference serves as a platform for operational fleet commanders to openly discuss maritime issues and enhance collaboration across the maritime domain through increased cohesion of effort. MARCOM took the opportunity to update naval leadership from across the Alliance on how NATO utilizes the ships, aircraft and submarines provided by the nations to support collective defense. Fleet Commanders also provided feedback to MARCOM on activities and operations. MARCOM staff officers will use these responses to help shape the planning for the next year. NSC contributions and the non-military impact on naval operations constituted an important part of the discussions.



*Participants at the MARCOM Maritime Operational Commanders Conference*

MARCOM staff were present at the NATO Partnership conference organized by SHAPE in Jordan from 25-29 March, meeting with NATO Partners in different engagement programs:

- PfP (Partners for Peace): Azerbaijan, Ireland, Finland, Sweden, Ukraine, Georgia
- Mediterranean Dialogue: Tunisia, Jordan, Morocco, Algeria, Israel, Egypt
- Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI): United Arab Emirates, Qatar
- Partners across the globe: Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Columbia, Republic of Korea.



The conference was a great opportunity to engage with staff officers and supporting headquarters, reviewing current shared activities.

A MARCOM staff officer attended the meeting NATO JFC Naples-Morocco on 20 March to support the NATO delegation from the Maritime Component.

### **NATO Shipping Centre (NSC) Updates**

The NATO Shipping Centre attended the UK MoD Shipping Defence Advisory Committee (SDAC) as an observer. The SDAC discusses issues about the safety of British merchant ships in periods of peace, tension or conflict. The NSC benefits from being present at the SDAC to be informed of National UK aspects on merchant maritime security, as well as the NSC providing updates on what is going on in maritime NATO. On this occasion, the Director of the NSC made SDAC aware of the Change of Command in MARCOM planned for 20 May, the increase of MARCOM/NSC manning and capabilities, the re-focus on protection of Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) and the continued development of the NCAGS Doctrine within both NATO and Partner Nations.

In support of Naval Cooperation and Guidance for Shipping (NCAGS) and SLOC doctrinal development, the NSC organised a workshop at Northwood HQ from 11-15 May. Efforts were focussed on revising the doctrine and to include all NCAGS Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTPs) in one dedicated publication (to become the ATP-02.2) rather than having elements of TTPs spread throughout other subject publications.

The NSC continues to monitor the situation in the Kerch Strait and Sea of Azov and the impact the activities are having on shipping in the area.

The NSC, in cooperation with US MARAD, continues to encourage all ships to report incidents of GPS jamming or interference in the Eastern Mediterranean. This reporting enables MARCOM to maintain overall awareness of cyber issues that may affect security or safety of navigation.

Merchant ships are also encouraged to report any suspicious activity in the Mediterranean Sea and broader North Atlantic Region to the NSC to support NATO's MSA and understanding of threats to shipping.

*Ben Lofstad*

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