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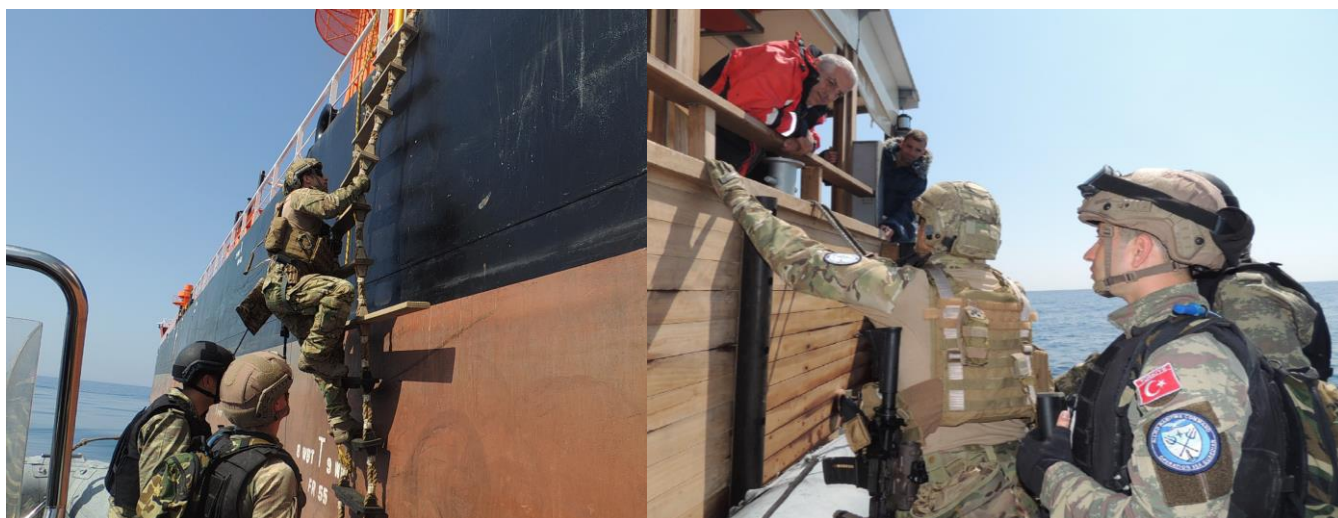
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER NATO MARCOM MAY

NATO MARCOM continues its operational activities highlighting the training activities of the Standing naval forces and the second Focused Operation in 2019 (FOCOPS 19-2) of Operation Sea Guardian (OSG) that took place in the Central and the Eastern Mediterranean.

Maritime Security Operations

During last April 78 warships from France, Turkey, Spain, Greece, Canada, Albania, Netherlands, United Kingdom and Germany took part in Operation Sea Guardian (OSG) carrying out tasks playing different roles in the Mediterranean, supported by 87 flights of NATO Airborne Early Warning (AEW) and Maritime Patrol Aircraft (MPA). The 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 have also provided critical support to this Maritime Security Operation.

OSG is upgrading NATO's Maritime Situational Awareness (MSA) in the Mediterranean, through the knowledge of the Maritime Pattern of Life (MPoL), and detecting anomalies to fight crime at sea, as a mean to counter terrorism. A total of 393 MV were hailed by NATO during April.



Standing Naval Maritime Groups

The Standing Naval Maritime Group 1 (SNMG-1) led from USS Gravelly (DDG 107) is now divided in two tactical units. One, that comprises the flagship and the following units: Polish frigate ORP General Kazimerz Pulaski, British frigate HMS Westminster, German Auxiliary FGS Rhön and the Turkish frigate TCG Gokova remain in the Baltic Sea carrying out operational training program (OTP) and MSA tasks; the other, that comprises the Spanish frigate ESPS “Almirante Juan de Borbón” has been detached to Faslane (UK) to participate in FORMIDABLE SHIELD 19, a warfare exercise led by the British Royal Navy. Before that, the entire group participated in the exercise JOINT WARRIOR 19-1 off Scotland and visited Belfast, Faslane and Liverpool. Then the Group entered the Baltic Sea carrying out MSA tasks and OTP, and visited Gdynia.

The Standing Naval Maritime Group 2 (SNMG-2) Tactical Unit 1 (TU 01) continues carrying out support operations to the EU, Greece and Turkey’s efforts to control migration in the Aegean Sea. In April, SNMG-2 TU 01 commanded from German frigate FGS Bonn and consists of the Albanian patrol vessel ALS Butrinti, the Turkish warship TCG Karsiyaka and the Greek patrol vessels HS Kasos, HS Blesas and HS Nikiforos, patrolled the areas assigned and sighted nine immigrant boats, reporting them to local authorities for further action. Towards the end of the period most ships of the unit were relieved and it now consists of FGS Hessen as flagship, The Turkish frigate TCG Tekirdag and the Greek patrol vessels HS Xenos and HS Kalypso.

SNMG-2 Tactical Unit 2 (TU 02) commanded by the Dutch frigate HNLMS Evertsen, with the Canadian frigate HMCS Toronto and the British frigate HMS Duncan commenced participation in exercise Mare Aperto 19-1, an Italian Navy exercise that takes place in the Ionian Sea. The American destroyer USS Bainbridge and the Spanish frigate ESPS Numancia have joined the Group to also take part in the exercise. During April, the Group operated in the Black Sea for exercise Sea Shield hosted by the Romanian Navy. The ships visited Odessa and Constanza before leaving the Black Sea and stopped for a port visit in Istanbul. Then, the Unit headed for Taranto (Italy) for a short port visit combined with exercise Mare Aperto’s Pre Sail Conference (PSC).

Standing Naval 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 Ramsey (recently relieved by the HMS Cattistock) and the Norwegian minehunter HNOMS Hinnøey. The Dutch HNLMS Zierikzee and the BNS Bellis also recently joined. The Group is in the Baltic Sea, after having operated in the North Sea for exercise Joint Warrior 19-1 which involved a range of scenarios, including crisis and conflict simulations. The units visited Aberdeen and Bergen before entering the Baltic. On the way an opportunity for training (PASSEX) with the Swedish Navy was utilized, including a port visit to Goteborg. SNMCMG1 is now busy with OTP and MSA tasks in the Baltic approaches.

SNMCMG-2, led from the German MCMV FGS Werra with the Turkish mine counter vessel TCG Ayvalik, (relieved TCG Akcakoca in late April), and the Spanish minehunter ESP Tajo are participating in the Spanish Navy exercise MINEX around the Balearic islands. Prior to that, the Group approached the Strait of Gibraltar from the West executing OTP and visiting Casablanca, Portimao and Seville before enroute.

MARCOM engagements

Several maritime security engagements were initiated by different (also non-maritime) NATO entities during April. MARCOM contributed with staff subject matter experts (SME’s) to all of them to provide the maritime view. As an example on 23th April a high level meeting was held in

the NATO HQ in Brussels with Ukrainian maritime authorities to discuss ways of collaboration between NATO and this Partner Nations in the Black Sea.

Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) on 23-28th April also sent a NATO delegation to Tokyo and Seoul for important engagements with these key relevant NATO Asiatic Partner Nations to review the current agreements of cooperation and deepen relationships.

The NATO Joint Force Commander (JFC) in Naples had a bilateral experts panel meeting in Tunis to discuss and analyse mutual concerns and seek shared actions. Tunisia is a key NATO partner included in the Mediterranean Dialogue program.

NATO Shipping Centre (NSC) Updates

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. These reports and assessments are forwarded to SHAPE to stet NATO strategic awareness.

In April, the Director of the NSC attended the Informal Shipowners Security Forum (ISSF – a most effective forum for discussing maritime security issues) as well as the Royal Navy's Maritime Engagement Forum at HMS Collingwood. April was also used for preparations for the NATO Shipping Working Group (NSWG) held at the Naval Barracks in Bruges, Belgium 6-10 May. More on that in the NSC May Newsletter.

The NSC, in cooperation with US MARAD continues encouraging all ships to report incidents of GPS jamming or interference in areas of 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 NSC and MARCOMs understanding of MSA and the threats to shipping.

Ben Lofstad

Commander, NOR N
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