



**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. 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**

EU NAVFOR operates 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.

Mandate

Under EU Council Joint Action 851, which is based on UN resolutions, Operation Atalanta:

- **Protects** vessels of the [World Food Programme](#) (WFP) and other vulnerable shipping.
- **Deters, Prevents** and **Represses** piracy and armed robbery at sea.
- **Monitors** fishing activities off the coast of Somalia.
- **Supports** other EU missions and international organisations working to strengthen maritime security and capacity in the region.

On 30 July 2018 the Council of the EU extended the Mandate of Operation Atalanta until December 2020.



FACTS AND FIGURES

Area of Operation: Southern Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and Western Indian Ocean.

Headquarters: Northwood (near London), United Kingdom

Starting date: December 2008

Operation Commander: Major General Charlie Stickland OBE



Troop strength: The composition of EU NAVFOR changes due to the rotation of units and varies according to size of warships. However, it typically comprises of approximately 1000 personnel, 3 – 4 warships and 2 Maritime Patrol and Reconnaissance Aircraft. For current 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 5.9 million for 2017 agreed and monitored by the Athena Committee of Member States.

Contributing states: Participation in EU NAVFOR goes beyond EU Member States. Norway was the first non-EU country to contribute to the Operation, with a warship in 2009. Thereafter, Montenegro, Serbia and Ukraine have provided staff officers to the Operational Headquarters (OHQ) and Force Headquarters (FHQ). Ukraine contributed a warship early in 2014, New Zealand contributed an MPRA asset later the same year and in 2015, Colombia units collaborated with EU NAVFOR assets to counter-piracy off the coast of Somalia.

The EU Naval Force has made a significant contribution to the reduction in piracy: In 2011, 174 vessels were attacked and 25 ships pirated with 736 seafarers held hostage. In 2013, 7 ships were attacked, none pirated. In 2014 two ships were attacked. There were no attacks in 2015 and one in 2016. In 2017, 9 vessels have been attacked, with two of the vessels being held by suspected pirates for a short period. For more key facts and figures, please visit the EU NAVFOR website.

The EU Integrated 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 Somalia 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.

International legal cooperation:

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. EU NAVFOR 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) 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.

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