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## Spanish Warship Reina Sofia Rescues Innocent Somali Crew Held Hostage by Pirates (Update)



**On Saturday 14 April Spanish warship ESPS Reina Sofia, who is now operating as part of the EU's counter-piracy mission, Operation Atalanta, stopped a Yemeni dhow that was suspected of carrying armed Somali pirates. The French Air Force Awacs E3F, FS Dixmude and her helicopters, as well as an Australian Maritime Patrol and Reconnaissance Aircraft (MPRA) contributed to this operation. As a result they were able to successfully release 4 innocent Somali crewmen who were being held as hostages onboard.**

Spanish Marines boarded the dhow that was believed to have been used as a mother ship and related to several pirate attacks in the area. After transferring the 20 men from the dhow to Reina Sofia, four of the men were quickly identified as innocent Somali crewmembers and they are now being cared for by the Spanish crew. Two Yemeni crew had reportedly already been let go by the suspect pirates after the dhow was pirated in late March.

As a result of her actions, Reina Sofia took out the threat of 16 pirates and their use of the dhow as a mother ship to attack merchant shipping in the Indian Ocean. The dhow and the Somali crew can now return safely to the homeport in Yemen.

As the crew of the dhow did not file a complaint and no clear evidence could be secured to identify the suspect pirates that carried out the attack on the merchant vessel, the 16 suspected pirates will be released.



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