

# NATO's Deployment in the Aegean Sea



Europe faces the greatest refugee and migrant crisis since the end of the Second World War. At the request of Allies, NATO is providing support to the broader international efforts to stem the flow of illegal trafficking and migration in the Aegean Sea.

## NATO's Role and Contribution

NATO Defence Ministers took swift decisions on 11 February 2016 to deploy ships to the Aegean Sea to support Greece and Turkey, as well as the European Union's border agency Frontex, in their efforts to tackle the refugee and migrant crisis.

NATO's Standing Maritime Group 2 (SNMG2) arrived in the Aegean Sea within 48 hours of the Ministers' decision. It is conducting reconnaissance, monitoring and surveillance in the territorial waters of Greece and Turkey, as well as in international waters.

## Providing support in the Aegean Sea

NATO's Standing Maritime Group 2 is deployed in the Aegean Sea to support international efforts to cut the lines of human trafficking and illegal migration.

NATO ships are providing real-time information to the coastguards and relevant national authorities of Greece and Turkey, as well as to Frontex, helping them in their efforts to tackle this crisis.

31 ships from 8 different nations have participated in NATO's activities in the Aegean Sea. Since February, NATO ships have patrolled more than 10,000 hours.

Thanks to the information collected by NATO ships, Greece, Turkey and Frontex are taking more effective action to break the business model of human traffickers and save lives. The number of migrants crossing the Aegean Sea has decreased significantly.

## Composition of NATO Deployment

In the Aegean Sea, SNMG2 currently consists of six ships<sup>1</sup>:

- HNLMS DE RUYTER (Netherlands);
- HMS MERSEY (UK);
- TCG BEYKOZ (Turkey);
- HS ROUSSEN (Greece);
- HS NIKIFOROS (Greece);
- HS MACHTIS (Greece);



<sup>1</sup> Accurate as of 25 October 2016. The composition and configuration of NATO's deployment in the Aegean Sea is reviewed on a regular basis.

SNMG2 is currently under the command of Rear Admiral Kay-Achim Schönbach, German Navy, and falls under the authority of Allied Maritime Command (MARCOM), Northwood, United Kingdom.

SNMG2 is a multinational maritime force made up of vessels from various Allied countries. These vessels are permanently available to NATO to perform different tasks ranging from exercises to operational missions.

## NATO-EU cooperation



To respond to the refugee and migrant crisis in Europe, NATO is working closely with the European Union.

At the tactical and operational level, NATO cooperates with the EU Border Management Agency, Frontex. Thanks to liaison arrangements between Allied Maritime Command and Frontex, information is being shared in real time, enabling Frontex to take even more effective action. Furthermore, Greek, Turkish and Frontex liaison officers have been deployed to the NATO Aegean activity, which also enables the exchange of information.

Cooperation is also ongoing at the political level. Since February 2016, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has held regular discussions on the refugee and migrant crisis with his EU counterparts including the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk; the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker; the EU High Representative/Vice-President of the Commission, Federica Mogherini; and European Commissioner for Migration Dimitris Avramopoulos.

At the Warsaw Summit in July, NATO leaders also agreed, in principle, on a possible NATO role in the Central Mediterranean, to complement or support the EU's Operation Sophia.

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