

Information Bulletin January 2023 – The Italian Command



Change of Command EMASoH – Looking Back



From the 6th of July 2022 until the 27th of January 2023, Operation AGENOR, the military pillar of EMASoH (European-led Maritime Awareness in the Strait of Hormuz) has been under Italian command. In this bulletin a brief summary is provided on the activities of Operation AGENOR during this period, including: the engagement with stakeholders and nations in the Region, the staff afloat on ITS Thaon di Revel, the dialogue with maritime organizations/companies, key leader engagement and the operational activities in relation to merchant shipping. With diplomatic endeavours and the deployment of assets such as the Thaon di Revel, the Italian command aimed to show their

commitment to Operation AGENOR and its goal: contributing to de-escalation, safety and security and the freedom of navigation. On the 27th of January 2023, Belgium took over the command of Operation AGENOR during a ceremony on the French Naval base in Abu Dhabi.



Naval Diplomacy

One of the key elements of the EMASoH initiative is to maintain good relations with regional stakeholders and nations. EMASoH keeps an inclusive attitude towards all Gulf nations and promotes the dialogue among the entire maritime cluster, with the aim of further stabilization and preventing escalation. Under Rear Admiral Stefano Costantino, the Italian Force Commander of Operation AGENOR, EMASoH managed to approach nearly all the Gulf countries and several others. By organising Sea Joined activities, welcoming delegations and paying visits to other countries, friendly relations were further established with: The United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Oman and India. In these engagements, the ITS Thaon di Revel, one of the newest ships of the Italian navy, played a crucial part. Its presence demonstrated a clear signal of friendship and good intentions towards nations in the region.



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Operation AGENOR Staff Afloat

The Staff of Operation AGENOR, including military personnel from seven European countries (Belgium, Denmark, France, Greece, Italy, The Netherlands and Norway), is usually based on shore. From their headquarters, the maritime situation in the area is assessed and operations are directed. During the Italian command, the staff operated afloat from a 'flagship' for the first time in the history of EMASoH. The ITS Thaon di Revel provided the needed services to create a fully functional working environment for the Staff. Being afloat meant a closer connection with the maritime environment, the crew of the ships involved in EMASoH and the possibility to engage with other countries, companies and organisations from close by. The staff afloat lasted for more than 2 months, from the end of August until the beginning of November.



During this period the staff on board of the Thaon di Revel continued its consistent work. Other than that, the staff supported the efforts of the ship such as: accompaniments, port visits, receptions, external communications and legal advice. In addition, the presence of Rear Admiral Costantino, which made the Thaon di Revel a 'flagship' was a great gesture towards friendly nations and other stakeholders in the Gulf Region and at sea.



EMASoH engaging the Maritime Cluster



In order to stay informed about the latest maritime developments, EMASoH has established further contact with the wider maritime cluster. The Naval Cooperation and Guidance for Shipping (NCAGS) cell of Operation AGENOR, is therefore proactively approaching regional organizations and stakeholders.

During the Italian rotation, the Operation AGENOR staff, together with Rear Admiral Costantino, managed to reach a diverse group within the maritime cluster. Firstly, EMASoH reached out to companies, the NCAGS cell held successful Video-Teleconferences (VTCs) with companies from all the EMASoH nations and several non EMASoH members that are active in the area. Some of these companies included cruise liners (AIDA, MSC, Costa), that welcomed members of the EMASoH staff to discuss further cooperation. Secondly, the NCAGS cell has established further cooperation with maritime agencies and shipping associations that are active in the Gulf Region and the Indian Ocean. These contacts are of great importance to EMASoH: In order to reassure merchant shipping, it is crucial to maintain full awareness of developments along the Sea Lines of Communication (SLoC). Most of the meetings with external parties were conducted through VTC. On occasion however, EMASoH was invited to several places around the Indian Ocean. Staff members of Operation AGENOR attended a conference in Singapore, conference on naval coordination in the Seychelles and were kindly invited to the Information Fusion Centre in India.



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Key Leader Engagement

For Operation AGENOR, as a part of a maritime awareness mission, it is crucial to keep informing and actively engaging decision makers about our daily endeavors. The activities of the Thaon di Revel, provided opportunities to invite a wide spectrum of leaders on board. Other than that, EMASoH has



also been able to receive key leaders to its headquarters several times. Highlights of such events were the visit of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands (Wopke Hoekstra) and the meeting with the Senior Coordinator of the EU's maritime presence in the North-West Indian Ocean (Michael Pulch). Both leaders were received by the Force Commander (Rear Admiral Costantino) and Operational Commander (Rear Admiral Slaars) of Operation AGENOR and were given information about EMASoH. The Dutch Foreign Minister also took the time to visit the Force Headquarters and to meet and greet military personnel of Operation AGENOR. Politicians and other regional key leaders have been visiting EMASoH on a regular basis during the Italian command, making the way free for further open and inclusive dialogues with the aim of further de-escalation in the Region.



Accompaniments and EMMA Calls



The analysis of the AIS data for the EMASoH shipping of interest has been extended to the interest of the whole European Union (flag and country of financial benefit). It appears that about three quarters of the EU and EMASoH interests are common; this means that EMASoH looks after almost 86% of the EU interests (with the addition of Norway) in the area of the Voluntary Reporting Scheme.

During the 9th rotation, 31 accompaniments have been performed and 313 EMMA calls have been conducted. The analysis of “patterns of life” we hold on a permanent basis show unmistakably that the

shipping continue to sail through the Tunb Traffic Separation Schemes (TSS) located west of the Strait of Hormuz along the Tunb islands. At EMASoH we consider this as a sort of “risk level feeling indicator”: all other things remaining, to our assessment, the more these TSS are used the less the seamen feel at risk. Based on the passages of ships flying EMASoH flags, approximately two third of the traffic having the choice transits through the Tunb TSS.

AIS data

AIS is one of the technical means supporting the capability to maintain a good picture of shipping in the area, as all ships above threshold tonnage are required to transmit their identifying data at all times, whether underway or at anchor. While this tool supports safety and security of navigation, we do observe instances where ships turn off their AIS transponders in the area, including when passing through the Strait of Hormuz. This practice not only makes the detailed monitoring of ships more challenging, but also may contribute to safety threats for ships sailing in the area, as switching off AIS highly likely draws the attention rather than dissimulate. We recommend strict adherence to the IMO guidelines with respect to the use of AIS by ships.

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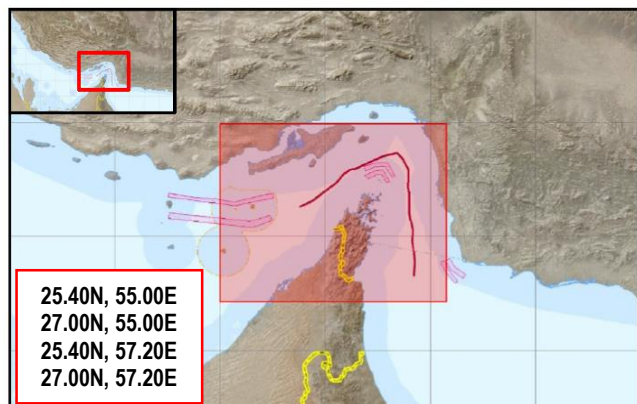


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GPS inconsistencies reporting



Since the last week of November 2022 EMASoH has received multiple reports regarding GPS data inconsistencies. The area where loss of GPS or GPS inconsistencies have been reported is within the following coordinates (see map): EMASoH would like to inform you about the potential loss of GPS when transiting this specific area. We kindly ask you to remain vigilant and report any GPS loss or data inconsistencies to EMASoH via the following email address: ctf474-emasoh.ncags.contact.fct@def.gouv.fr

At this time, no further assessment regarding the origin of GPS loss and/or data inconsistencies can be made. Any provided data (such as starting and ending-point of GPS loss and timestamps) by ships will add valuable information to an assessment on the origin.

Voluntary Reporting Scheme

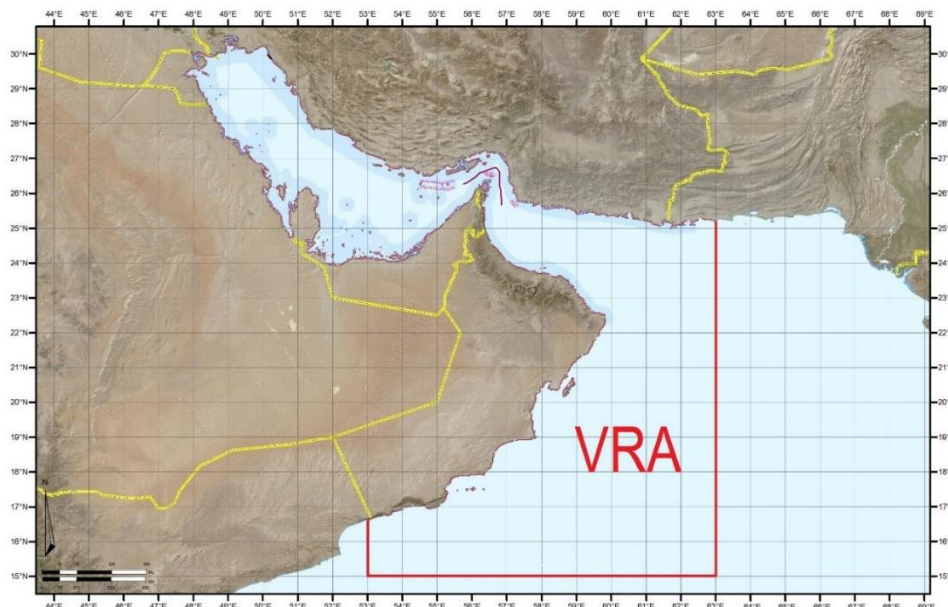
Shipping operators are invited to participate to a Voluntary Reporting Scheme. Voluntary reporting improves the cooperation and guidance EMASoH can provide to ships on the basis of informing, reassuring, and promoting the freedom of navigation. Voluntary reported ships are also prioritised for possible accompaniments with EMASoH's naval assets and reassuring EMMA (EMASoH Maritime Awareness) calls with naval and aerial assets.

Before entering the Voluntary Reporting Area (VRA), 48 hours in advance, or as soon as possible:

- ✓ **Inform** EMASoH of the timing of your intended entry and exit of the VRA;
- ✓ **Confirm** the planning 6 hours before entering and share possible changes to the journey planning;
- ✓ **Report** any suspicious behaviour to the coast guard of the coastal state and to EMASoH.

Reporting to EMASoH is possible via ctf474-emasoh.vra.fct@def.gouv.fr or phone **+971 265 74 278**.

The EMASoH **Voluntary Reporting Area (VRA)** comprises the entire Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz, and a part of the Arabian Sea between the 53E and 63E meridians and the 15N parallel.



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