



European Maritime Awareness in the Strait of Hormuz Operation AGENOR

PRESS RELEASE 01/2024

Abu Dhabi, UAE, 12th of January 2024

Abu Dhabi, UAE – January 12th, 2024 – Press release by EMASoH on the unlawful boarding of the merchant vessel *St. Nikolas* in the Gulf of Oman.

Yesterday, on the 11th of January the merchant vessel *St. Nikolas* was boarded by armed personnel south east of the Strait of Hormuz, off the coast of Oman. The boarders were reported to be wearing military style black uniforms with black masks. The Company Security Officer (CSO) of the shipping company also reported that the vessel had altered course towards Iranian territorial waters and communications had been lost. Acting on initial external information, EMASoH sent out a French maritime patrol aircraft Atlantique 2 that rapidly located the ship, which was escorted by two Iranian Navy patrol vessels. The Atlantique 2 continued to monitor the ship's movement until she entered Iranian territorial waters. She is now at anchor near Bandar Abbas.

The boarding, in breach of international law, happened while the merchant vessel was sailing in international waters in the Gulf of Oman. The *St. Nikolas* was at the time heading to Turkey according to the destination transmitted by her Automatic Identification System (AIS).

EMASoH is committed to safeguarding maritime security in the wider Gulf region. One of the key mission objectives of EMASoH is to document any illegal activity in the Gulf region and Strait of Hormuz, which this case clearly is. EMASoH Operation AGENOR continues to closely monitor the situation.

In light of these events, our thoughts are with the crew of the *St. Nikolas* and their families.

We also express our concern regarding the seizure of the merchant vessel *Advantage Sweet* by the Iranian Navy on April 27, 2023, and the subsequent seizure of the merchant vessel *Niovi* by the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps Navy on May 3, 2023 as the oil tankers continue to be held. Our thoughts are with the crews on board, as well as their families.

There are thousands of ships sailing in the Gulf region and through the Strait of Hormuz on a daily basis. These are monitored, informed and reassured by EMASoH. Vessels are advised to transit with caution and report movements through the Voluntary Reporting Scheme (emasoh-agenor.org). They may inform of any suspicious activity or concerns to EMASoH (+971 26574278 or ctf474-emasoh.bwc.fct@def.gouv.fr).

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Figure 1 – Picture by Atlantique 2 from tanker St. Nicolas escorted by Iranian Navy patrol vessel

For more information:

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