



EMASoH in January: Latest News

- Unlawful boarding of the merchant vessel *St. Nikolas* by Iran.
- EMASoH's Operation AGENOR: a Four-Year Milestone.
- Maritime Awareness Patrols in the Gulf region of the French Maritime Patrol Aircraft Atlantique 2.
- An analysis by Naval Cooperation and Guidance for Shipping.
- EMASoH Operation AGENOR engaged in training sessions.
- Information about the EMASoH Voluntary Reporting Scheme (VRS).
- The VRS tool on the EMASoH website.

Unlawful boarding of *St. Nikolas*

On the 11th of January the merchant vessel *St. Nikolas* was boarded by armed persons 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.

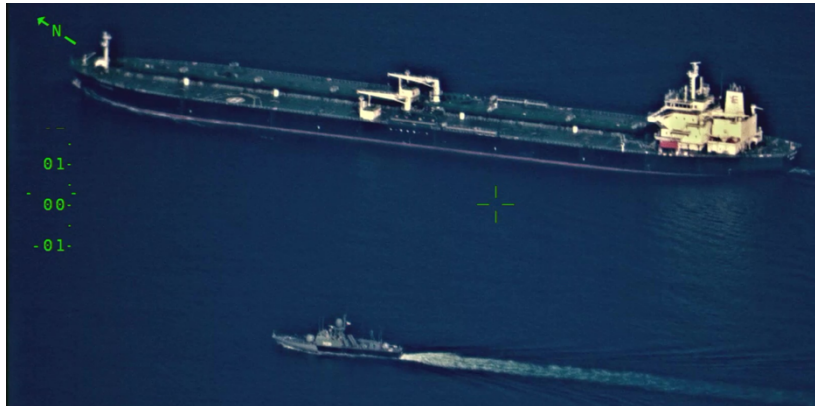


Figure 1 - Picture by Atlantique 2 from tanker *St. Nikolas* escorted by Iranian Navy patrol vessel

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. Gaining evidence of the seizure, the Atlantique 2 continued to monitor the ship's movement until she entered Iranian territorial waters. She is since then 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).

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.

Scan the QR-code to view the press release on the unlawful boarding of the *St. Nikolas*.

4 Years of EMASoH

Four years ago, eight European nations—Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, later joined by Norway—formed a collaborative effort to initiate a de-escalatory mission aimed at bolstering maritime security and ensuring the freedom of navigation in the Gulf region.

On January 20th, 2020, a joint declaration was issued by these European countries, and by February 25th, 2020, EMASoH achieved full operational status. Since then, military personnel from seven nations have actively engaged in Operation AGENOR, the military pillar of EMASoH. Aligned with the diplomatic pillar, Operation AGENOR is committed to reassuring maritime merchant operators, enhancing safe navigation, actively contribute to de-escalation efforts, and fostering inclusive, trans-regional dialogue.

Over the course of four years, the seven navies involved in Operation AGENOR have upheld a consistent active presence in the Strait of Hormuz. This has been achieved through the deployment of 26 warships and the completion of 2,087 flight hours, specifically utilizing the French maritime patrol aircraft Atlantique 2. Their mission has been to support and reassure, providing full accompaniment to 276 merchant vessels, with a notable 168 vessels supported in the year 2023 alone.



Figure 2 - EMASoH flag

Maritime Awareness Patrols of the French Atlantique 2



Figure 3 – ATL2 on Maritime Situational Awareness Patrols

The French Maritime Patrol Aircraft (MPA) Atlantique 2 (also known as ATL2) takes flight for crucial awareness missions in support of EMASoH's Operation AGENOR.

This maritime patrol aircraft is equipped with 2 x Rolls-Royce Tyne RTy.20 Mk 21 series turboprop engines, each boasting 6,100 horsepower. With a cruising speed of 200 miles per hour, the ATL2 ensures swift and efficient operations. Its impressive ferry range of 5,635 miles and mission endurance time of up to 18 hours make it a reliable asset for extended maritime missions. The aircraft is capable of operating at altitudes ranging from 100 feet up to 30,000 feet, thanks to its pressurized cabin and flight deck.

The Atlantique 2 crew, functioning as Operation AGENOR's aerial eyes, uses the MPA's extensive coverage and communication capabilities. Currently, the French aircraft is actively involved in maritime situational awareness patrols and establishing contact with shipping for EMASoH. With this valuable asset, EMASoH conducts a realistic assessment of the area, a critical element for reassuring merchant shipping in the Gulf region.

Naval Cooperation and Guidance for Shipping (NCAGS)

The purpose of the NCAGS organisation is to provide Ship Owners, Operators, Masters and Naval Officers with vital information concerning the interaction between naval forces and merchant shipping. This support and co-operation take place during peacetime, tension, crisis and conflict.

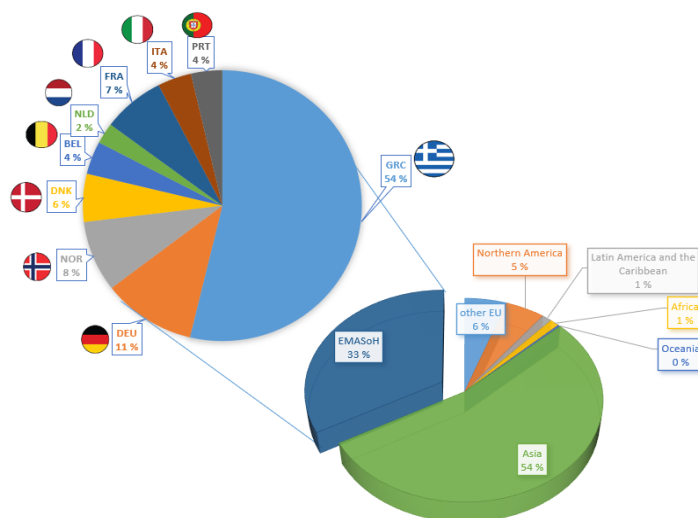
For civilian shipping (as well as military), the benefits are manifold:

- Enhanced security through access to a comprehensive maritime picture.
- Reduced transit delays in military Areas of Operation or exercise zones.
- Improved response to threats, resulting in decreased interference.
- Enhanced comprehension of maritime activities, particularly regarding commercial shipping.

When considering the global tonnage of the world fleet, EMASoH nations collectively account for over 30%, with Greece notably prominent due to its substantial tanker fleet.

World Merchant fleet by country of beneficial ownership and by dead-weight tonnage(DWT) – all types of ship (2023)

- GRC 17.8 %
 - DEU 3.6 %
 - NOR 2.8 %
 - DNK 1.9 %
 - BEL 1.3 %
 - NLD 0.823 %
 - FRA 2,4 %
 - ITA 1,3 %
 - PRT 1,2 %
- 33,123 %



* UNCTAD 2023b

Figure 4 – World Merchant Fleet by Country of beneficial ownership and DWT (UNCTAD, 2023)

Through the initiation of a fully Voluntary Reporting Scheme (VRS), EMASoH gains insights into the intentions of merchant vessels transiting the Strait of Hormuz. These insights bolster the military aspect of the EMASoH Operation AGENOR, fortifying its maritime domain awareness. Sharing this information is pivotal to the mission's success and optimises the positioning of its assets at sea and in the air. It's worth noting that information received by EMASoH Operation AGENOR is handled with the utmost commercial confidentiality.

While participation in reporting is entirely voluntary, AGENOR has observed a notable increase in daily reports. The EMASoH Database, a direct outcome of the VRS, has experienced exponential growth, exceeding 400% growth over the past 12 months. As AGENOR monitors reported transits, this serves to reassure ships and their crews of AGENOR's presence in the area. Moreover, while in port, Masters are given the opportunity to engage in open dialogue with our Liaison team, expressing their expectations and reflections.

EMASoH Training



Figure 4 – EMASoH Operation AGENOR training sessions

In January the EMASoH Staff engaged in several training sessions on varying topics.

We are committed to maintaining our operational capabilities. Therefore, the members of EMASoH's staff actively participate in regular training sessions. These sessions feature fictive scenarios, designed to refine understanding of various subjects including operational procedures and Rules of Engagements (ROEs).

To ensure adherence to our mission mandate and swift response to any maritime incidents, it is crucial to have a comprehensive understanding of the maritime environment and the maritime regulations and international

maritime law. This knowledge therefore forms the foundation for effective and timely actions in the Strait of Hormuz and Gulf region.

EMASoH Voluntary Reporting Scheme (VRS)

Merchant vessels are invited to take part in our Voluntary Reporting Scheme. Voluntary reporting improves the cooperation and guidance that EMASoH can provide to those ships. They will also be prioritised in the event of accompaniments and reassuring calls performed by both navy ships and aircrafts.

48 hours prior to entering the Voluntary Reporting Area (VRA), or as soon as possible:

- ✓ **inform** EMASoH about your estimate time of entry into and exit from the VRA;
- ✓ **confirm** your time 6 hours before entering and please keep us informed of any changes in your intentions;
- ✓ **report** any suspicious behaviour;

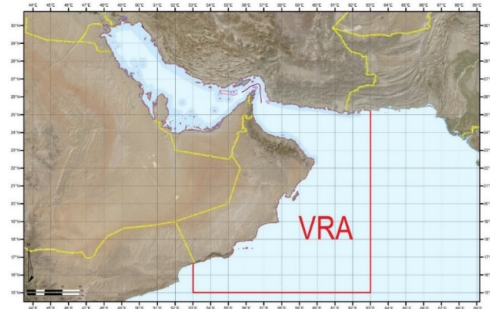


Figure 5 - EMASoH VRA

VRS reporting on EMASoH website

Voluntary Reporting Scheme - VRS

All ships entering the EMASoH Voluntary Reporting Area are invited to provide the following information 48 hours prior to entering the area or as soon as possible and report suspicious behaviour or unusual events.

The data sent through this form will only be used by EMASoH's Naval Cooperation and Guidance for Shipping

Ship name *	<input type="text"/>
IMO number *	<input type="text"/>
Flag state *	<input type="text"/>
Bridge / ship master phone number *	<input type="text"/>
telephone number	<input type="text"/>
Ship master email *	<input type="text"/>
email address	<input type="text"/>

Figure 6 - Voluntary Reporting Scheme Tool

To simplify the reporting process and make it more efficient a web-based reporting form has been developed.

This tool should guarantee the integrity of the data.

Ideally you would fill in our form online, but alternatively you can report by email.

More information about the VRS: <https://www.emasoh-agenor.org/voluntary-reporting-scheme>

Voluntary reporting to EMASoH via ctf474-emasoh.vra.fct@def.gouv.fr

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