



# European Maritime Awareness in the Strait of Hormuz Operation AGENOR

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## BELGIUM TRANSITIONS THE COMMAND OF TASK FORCE AGENOR

Abu Dhabi, UAE – March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2024 – The European Maritime Awareness Operation in the Strait of Hormuz (EMASoH), currently under the Admiral Benelux (ABNL) flag has officially transitioned the tactical command of Task Force AGENOR. The Change of Command Ceremony, held under the authority of Operation Commander French Vice Admiral Emmanuel Slaars, saw Belgian Rear Admiral Gilles Colmant assume the Force Command from the Belgian Rear Admiral Hans Huygens, who led Operation AGENOR since December 2023. Present at the ceremony were Ambassador Jakob Brix Tange, the Senior Civilian Representative of EMASoH, followed by Lieutenant General Descheemaeker and Rear Admiral Lenssen, representing the Belgian Operation Centre and the Royal Netherlands Navy, respectively.

EMASoH, with its diplomatic and military pillars, is dedicated to upholding freedom of navigation and ensuring maritime security, while also striving to de-escalate tensions and promote inclusive regional dialogue in the Gulf region. Currently, nine nations, including Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway and Portugal, participate in this mission.

Operation AGENOR has seamlessly continued its Belgian Force Command under Admiral Benelux-flag, the combined military staff of the Naval Component of the Belgian Armed Forces and the Royal Netherlands Navy, with a mid-rotation change of command. During the initial three months of the ongoing six-month rotation, the Force Headquarters, supported by the dedicated assets, have significantly enhanced maritime security and safeguarded freedom of navigation in the Gulf region. Collaborative efforts from France and Italy have played a crucial role, with contributions including notably a frigate, maritime patrol aircraft and UAVs, collectively strengthening the operational capabilities and maritime awareness.

The participation of naval and aerial assets from contributing nations play a pivotal role in ensuring the success of the mission at sea. Since the launch of the mission on January 20<sup>th</sup> 2020, the operation has witnessed the involvement of 26 ships, manned by a dedicated force exceeding 3500 seamen and -women, collectively spending more than 1300 days at sea. Aerial assets have logged over 2900 flight hours making over 1600 reassurance calls, demonstrating the commitment to maritime security. Operation AGENOR conducted over 275 accompaniments of merchant vessels in the Strait of Hormuz and the Gulf region, also underscoring its commitment to safe navigation.

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In his speech, Rear Admiral Huygens emphasized the operations continued de-escalatory posture and dedication to achieving stable regional security. Rear Admiral Huygens: “Building trust and reassuring shipping community as well as national partners requires continued presence and that is what Europe should deliver.” Rear Admiral Colmant expressed his privilege and honour in assuming tactical command, emphasising the importance of Operation AGENOR as there is no alternative for the Gulf.

The Change of Command signifies another seamless transition in leadership, reaffirming EMASoH’s commitment to maritime security in the Strait of Hormuz and its surrounding areas. The collaborative efforts of the participating nations underscore the mission’s effectiveness in maintaining stability and security in this strategically vital region.

Find the pictures of the Change of Command Ceremony below (source: *FFEAU – Forces françaises aux Émirats arabes unis*).

For more information:

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Figure 1 – The Senior Civilian Representative of EMASoH, the Première Conseillère to the French Embassy in the UAE, the Operation Commander, the outgoing Force Commander and his authority and the incoming Force Commander and his authority present at the Change of Command Ceremony.



Figure 2 - The staff of the Force Headquarters at the Change of Command Ceremony.



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Figure 3 - The new Force Commander Rear Admiral Gilles Colmant receiving the tactical command of Task Force AGENOR from the Operation Commander Vice Admiral Emmanuel Slaars.



Figure 4 – Rear Admiral Gilles Colmant addressing the guests and the staff of the Force Headquarters.