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1 January - 31 October 2016

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EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE



European Union Military Staff



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EUNAVFOR MED
operation SOPHIA

Via di Centocelle, 301
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Rome, 15 November 2016

Prot. nr. IT-EU OHQ/100454/2016/CG

To General Mikhail Kostarakos
Chairman of the EU Military Committee
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BE-1040 Brussels

Copy DG EUMS, DSG SERRANO

Enclosure: 1

Subject: EUNAVFOR MED Op. SOPHIA – SIX MONTHLY REPORT

Siz

I enclose a copy of the EUNAVFOR MED Operation SOPHIA Six Monthly Report for the period 1 January-31 October 2016.

I remain at your disposal to provide any further information regarding the contents of the report, and stand ready to present the report to the Political and Security Committee and the EU Military Committee.

Yans Smareby

Enrico CREDEBINO
Rear Admiral, Italian Navy
EUNAVFOR MED operation SOPHIA
Operation Commander

EUNAVFOR MED OPERATION SOPHIA SIX MONTHLY REPORT

REPORTING PERIOD: 1 JANUARY 2016 – 31 OCTOBER 2016

Executive Summary

Irregular migration across the Mediterranean continued at around the same levels as in the previous reporting period. However, the start of implementation of the EU Turkey Statement in early April, effectively halting arrivals on the Eastern Mediterranean Route, changed the pattern of migration with the Central Mediterranean Route quickly becoming the most intensively used pathway into Europe. Although the closure of the Eastern Route did not lead to any increase in migrants from the Middle East on the Central Mediterranean Route, it coincided with a re-emergence of irregular migration from Egypt.

Migrant smugglers were increasingly observed trying to recover their vessels and engines, as EUNAVFOR MED Operation SOPHIA (ENFM) continued to dispose of such boats, whenever not possible to transport them to Italy to support investigations or prosecutions. Smugglers are relying on an increasing number of NGO rescue vessels that are operating close to, and sometimes within, Libyan territorial waters while ENFM maintained a deterrence effect on the high seas.

The operation continued to enhance the security in the Mediterranean. In particular, during the reporting period, 53 persons suspected of smuggling migrants or facilitating such smuggling were arrested by the Italian judicial authorities following information provided or action taken by the Operation. ENFM also disposed of 269 smuggling boats and was involved in 154 SOLAS events, rescuing 20,980 migrants during these ten months, 5000 of them were in extreme difficulties and their boats would have sunk if not timely rescued by ENFM assets.

In June, the mandate of ENFM was reinforced with two additional tasks supporting the execution of the core mandate and the achievement of the mission objectives, and in early September, the Operation started contributing to implementing the arms embargo towards Libya on the high seas off the Libyan coast and providing a deterrence effect against arms smugglers in the Mediterranean. The operation's understanding of the pattern of life in the operating areas is steadily improving and allows assets to be more effectively employed.

Contacts and cooperation with the Libyan authorities intensified, as I held several meetings with the Libyan Committee of Experts to agree on a Memorandum of Understanding detailing the practical arrangements for the 14-week training package on the high seas. Vetting of the selected candidates was done with support from select Member States, Europol and UNSMIL. This is the first time that sea based training on such a wide and ambitious scale has been implemented. The start of training marks a milestone for the operation and is allowing relationship building with the Libyan Naval Coastguard, crucial for enhancing the ability of moving the operation forward into the next phases.

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My outreach activities were key in maintaining continued confidence in the operation at the regional and international level, also after the introduction of the additional two tasks. I continued to focus on building relations to enhance our understanding of the smugglers' business model, including with UN Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Europol, INTERPOL as well as with IOM, UNHCR, OHCHR, UNSMIL and EUBAM. Good relations among EU actors continued with intensified coordination on the training initiative with Member States, EEAS, the Commission and Frontex. As a result of these efforts, I will shortly sign cooperation agreements with UNODC and INTERPOL, which will contribute to building the picture of smuggling and trafficking networks, and support us in the achievement of our mandate.

Nevertheless, there are a number of key challenges that need to be addressed in the short-term. A sustainable funding mechanism is required to allow us to complete the training packages in line with our commitments and Libyan needs and expectations, while to successfully implement the arms embargo, the operation needs more accurate, timely and reliable intelligence.

Accurate, timely and robust intelligence support is one of the critical requirements for ENFM to succeed. Due to the dimensions of the AOO and the scarce assets currently allocated to it, information sharing has to improve if we are to optimise operational effectiveness in implementing the arms embargo task.

The operation has continued to show great results and has to date disposed of 337 migrant vessels preventing them from being re-used by smugglers, while 99 suspected migrant smugglers/human traffickers have been arrested following information provided or action taken by the Operation. So far, the operation has also completed the rescue of nearly 29,317 migrants (4724 female and 1701 minors), recovering them to a place of safety.

ENFM is the first EU Naval Force to operate in the Mediterranean, an area of strategic and economic importance to Europe, and at the centre of many security challenges that affect Europe as a whole. In the reporting period, the operation has transformed into a multi-faceted Maritime Security Operation carrying out a range of tasks from Maritime Situational Awareness, to capacity building and law enforcement while building an extensive network of contacts; all furthering the achievement of the mission objective.

The Global Context

During the reporting period, over 333,453 migrants crossed the Mediterranean. The three main routes that continue to be employed for irregular migration across the Mediterranean Sea are 1. the Western Mediterranean Route (WMR), from North West Africa to Spain, 2. the Central Mediterranean Route (CMR) from North Africa to Italy and Malta and 3. the Eastern Mediterranean Route (EMR) from Turkey to Greece.

Of the total arrivals on the three Mediterranean routes 51 percent (161,272 migrants) arrived through the CMR, as compared to 18.4 percent (141,654 migrants) during the same period in 2015. The proportional increase comes as a result of the EU Turkey

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Statement, which dramatically reduced migration flows on the EMR from early April 2016 onwards. The total increase in the number of arrivals on the CMR compared with last year was slightly smaller, 13.85 percent.

Only 10 percent (16,356 migrants) used the EMR during the reporting period which represents a reduction by 59 percent compared with last year. The WMR remains little used due to the efforts of countries of transit.

Migrant smugglers are adaptable and adjust according to changing scenarios. The start of the implementation of the EU Turkey statement also coincided with a resumption of the irregular migration route from Egypt. Between 4 April and 31 October, 10,862 migrants arrived in Europe via this route. In July, I visited Egyptian authorities in Cairo to discuss the resumption of this flow, and they gave me assurances of their efforts to tackle irregular migration originating from Egypt. My assessment is that the Egyptian Coastguard is able to prevent migrant boats leaving Egyptian waters, which usually occurs using a small boat that takes the migrants to a mothership, most often an old fishing vessel. On 17 October, the Egyptian Parliament adopted new legislation against migrant smuggling which, if implemented, will according to IOM be a strong deterrent for smugglers as it stipulates imprisonment and substantial fines for smugglers and accomplices, while safeguarding the rights of migrants. Meanwhile, migrant flows from Turkey to Italy continue to be limited.

The global context 2016

(Until 4 Apr 2016)

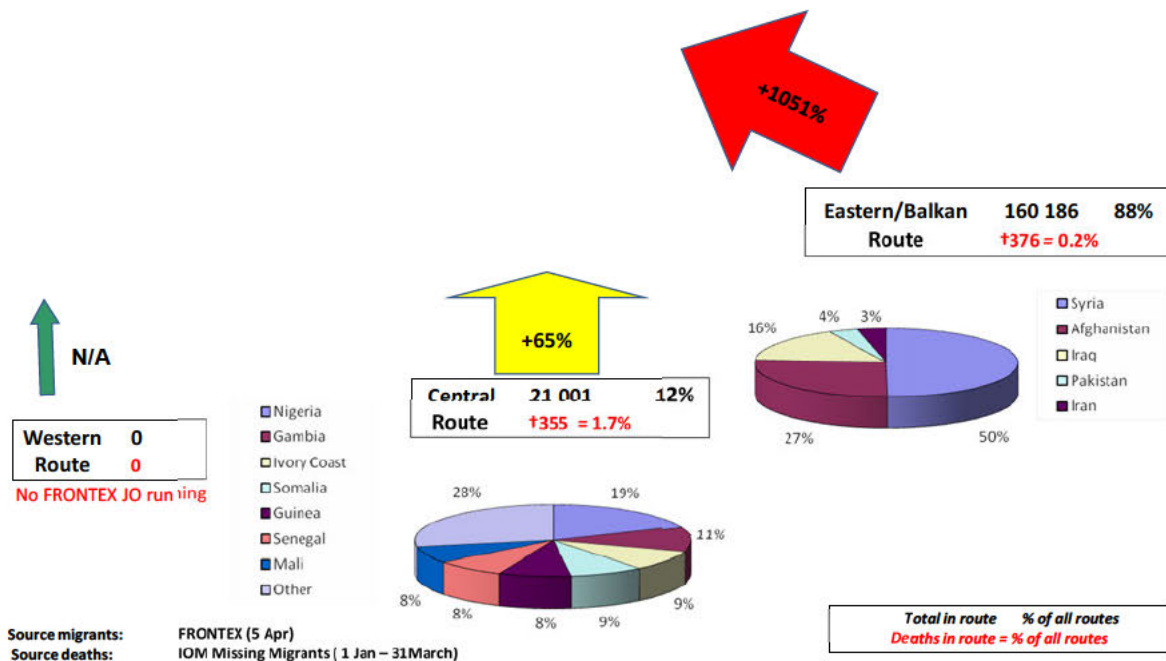


Figure 1: The global context on 1 January – 4 April 2016

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The global context

(From 04 Apr 2016 to 31 Oct 2016)

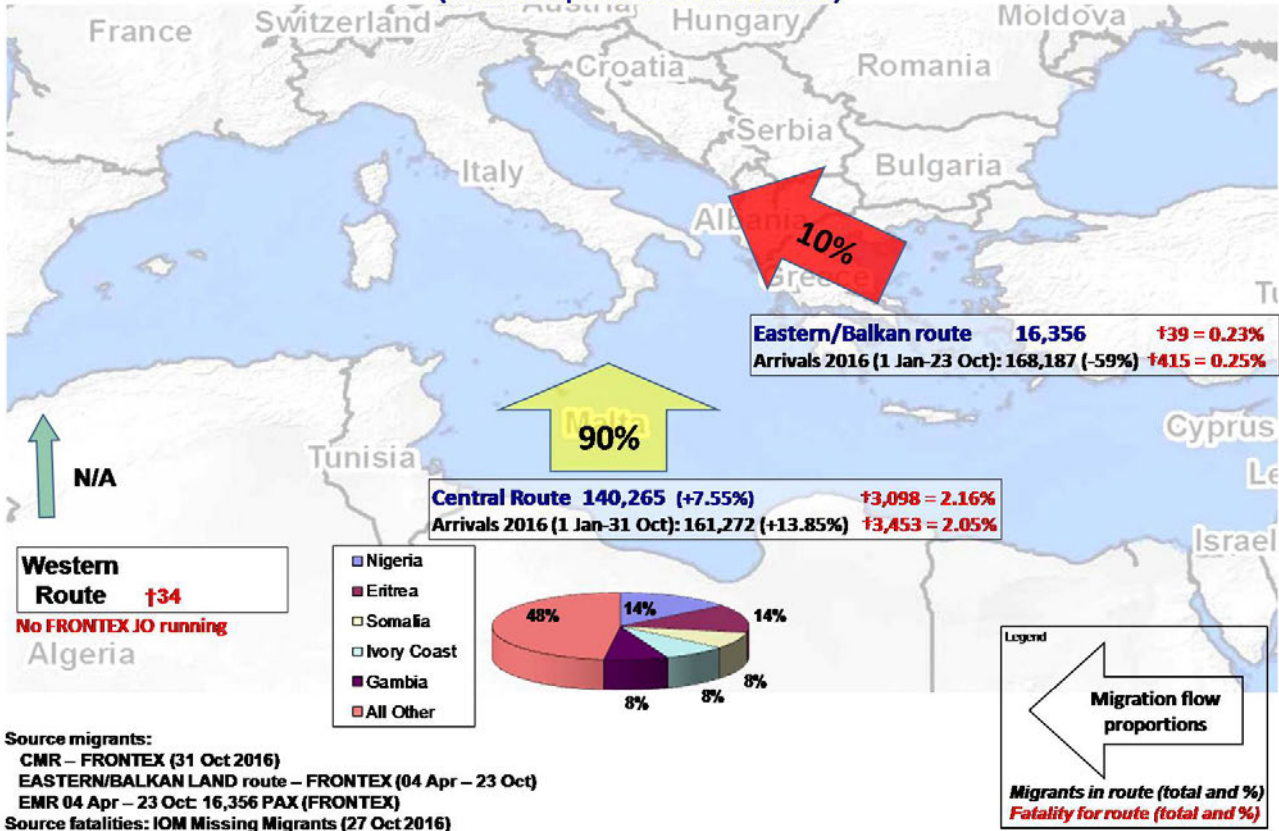


Figure 2: The global context as of 31 October 2016

Smugglers' Business Model

Libya

The first quarter of the year saw fewer arrivals on the CMR due to unfavourable weather conditions. In the second quarter the number of migrants rescued almost doubled and, again this year, the warm summer months through to early October saw the highest number of migrant launches. After a peak in August, the flow substantially reduced and, as the season progressed into autumn, the weather permitted only occasional migrant launches. For example, a three-day period of favourable weather conditions in early October saw more than 10,000 migrants rescued.

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The majority of migrants still die inside or very close to Libyan territorial waters, although an increasing number of persons are rescued by Libyan Coastguard vessels. According to FRONTEX data, the Libyan Coastguard rescued around 600 persons in 2015, while 2230 persons were rescued during the reporting period.

Migrants are usually coaxed or forced to use the CMR, which is the most cost-effective route with most launches taking place within the “Lampedusa triangle” covering the area between Zuwarah and Misrata in western Libya and Lampedusa in Italy. No significant change has been observed in the nationalities of migrants on the CMR who mainly originate from sub-Saharan Africa. The most common countries of origin in 2016 were: Nigeria, Eritrea, Somalia, the Ivory Coast, Gambia, Mali, Bangladesh, Guinea, Senegal, Ethiopia, Egypt, Ghana, Morocco and Burkina Faso. The nationality of around 14 percent of the rescued migrants remains unknown.

A report from earlier this year based on interviews with migrants conducted on board of FGS BERLIN affirms that female migrants regularly report acts of sexually motivated harassment and violence by smugglers.

Migrant smuggling and human trafficking networks are well ingrained into local patterns of life, employing facilitators while paying off authorities and other militias. Migrant smuggling, originating far beyond Libyan borders, remains a major source of income among locals in Libyan coastal cities generating estimated annual revenue of up to EUR 275 to 325 million.

The smuggling routes pass through the Sahel and arrive in Libya through Sabha in the southwest via hubs in Tamanrasset in Algeria and Agadez in Niger. These well-established smuggling routes are used northwards for human trafficking and narcotics and southwards for weapons intended for fragile Central African and South American countries. Al Qaeda and AQIM, aligned with the Tuareg tribe in south-western Libya, are assessed to be financially exploiting these smuggling routes. The same north-south pattern is recognised in eastern Libya generally passing through Khartoum and Dongola in Sudan and then on to Kufra in south-eastern Libya. Along this route the Tebu tribe is the main profiteer. All smuggling routes converge in the Lampedusa triangle, with no migrant launches taking place from eastern Libya. Although there is no evidence of terrorists trying to enter through CMR, terrorist organisations might be financially profiting from smuggling and trafficking.

Smugglers Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTP) Evolution

During the reporting period subtle changes were observed in the smugglers’ tactics. Whereas initially smugglers used large numbers of powered rubber boats enabling the transport of a maximum number of migrants up to the limit of territorial waters, the new modus operandi entails a skiff towing a rubber boat without an engine, which is then left adrift. This relies on the availability of NGOs, and sometimes merchant vessels, to carry out the rescue.

The presence of ENFM has not contributed to increasing the flow of migrants as the “push factors” are in the countries of origin. The number of persons rescued by our assets accounts for only 13 percent of the total number of migrants rescued on the CMR, which

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cannot be regarded as decisive in terms of a “pull factor”. Data also suggests that the CMR has remained largely steady over the years, and the route is characterised by heavy traffic of merchant ships and other vessels that are called upon by the Maritime Coordination Rescue Centres (MRCCs) to rescue other vessels in danger in compliance with international law. Given this density of maritime traffic in the CMR rescues would take place regardless of ENFM’s presence.

The existence of migration along the CMR is a reality that must be managed as safely and effectively as possible. Military units, such as ENFM ships, can operate even in challenging weather conditions, ensure a medical and health screening in order to contain any pandemic risk in countries of arrival, security checks in order to report suspects to responsible authorities as well as whenever necessary provide security to ships belonging to NGOs, FRONTEX etc. ENFM also provides early maritime situational awareness to NGOs of emerging rescue tasks through its Maritime Patrol Aircraft capability

Up to as many as 26 NGO maritime assets have been registered on the high seas on the CMR. The migration flow is assessed to be affected by this increased presence of NGO’s that are ready to rescue migrants within the limit of, and sometimes inside, Libyan territorial waters. It could be argued that by operating so close to the Libyan territorial waters the NGO presence has allowed the smugglers to recover boats to the shore more easily for re-use and shorten the average rescues from 75nm to 35 and now 20nm from the Libyan shore.

A majority of boats no longer depart with Thuraya phones and therefore no longer make distress calls to the Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC). This is believed to be because smugglers seem to be aware where they can reliably find rescuing assets particularly from the NGO’s who broadcast their position via the Automatic Identification System (AIS).

Another common technique employed by smugglers consists of two rubber boats, one towing the other, shadowed by jackals or facilitators, usually posing to be fishermen, who attempt to recover the rubber boats once the migrants have been rescued. The rubber boat should be towed back to shore to be recycled, thus boosting smugglers’ profits and relieving pressure on logistical supply. However, ENFM has on such occasions identified and apprehended smugglers, and we continue to limit jackals’ freedom to retrieve boats in international waters. The new focus on recovery of vessels suggests that ENFM’s destruction of vessels is having an impact on the supply of outboard engines, combined with smugglers’ desire to maximise their profits.

Additionally, a minor increase has been observed in the use of smaller wooden boats, self-provided rubber boats and RHIBS usually taking fewer migrants (up to 15) departing from Tunisia and Libya. These migrants do not fit the traditional migrant profile, but are rather wealthy looking young men of Arabic origin with valuables and money. ENFM is looking into this new occurrence.

Future Assessment

A continued political turmoil in Libya is likely to keep impacting efforts to crack down on migrant smuggling and human trafficking networks in the country. Serious efforts and

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enhanced ability from the Libyan authorities, including in the form of training and capacity building of the Navy and Coastguard, could decrease irregular migration from Libya. Smuggling networks are adaptable and are likely to attempt finding new routes, especially when the demand is likely to remain high. Nevertheless, a better trained Coastguard and Navy, combined with political willingness to tackle smuggling, will restrict smugglers' freedom of manoeuvre making large-scale smuggling from well-known coastal hubs on the Libyan shores more difficult.

Weapons smuggling in the Libyan theatre

Most ammunition and weapons used by militias affiliated to Da'esh or Al Qaeda are from the Gaddafi-era weapons inventory. Since the implosion of Libya and the looting of ammunition depots during the Arab Spring in 2011, these stocks fell into the hands of various Islamist rival militias. Such militias have established arms trafficking networks across West Africa, particularly in connection with terrorist armed groups located in the Sahel-Saharan strip. Smuggled weapons are also coming into Libya via the Mediterranean Sea.

The Libyan coastline allows networks to access all of its coasts when the roads are cut by checkpoints manned by rival factions.

Two main maritime supply routes affects the Libyan theatre, firstly the inter-theatre route into the AOO, originating from Egypt or beyond e.g. Lebanon, Turkey or even as far as countries along the coasts of the Black Sea destined for Benghazi, Misrata or Tripoli. Secondly, the intra-theatre routes in the Gulf of Sirte between Benghazi, Misrata and Sirte.

Militias and terrorist groups involved in illegal arms trafficking include but are not limited to Da'esh, Al-Qaeda's Libyan affiliate, Ansar al-Sharia, the Benghazi Revolutionaries Shura Council (SCBR), Shura Council of Derna Mujahidin (SCDM), Libya Dawn (Fajr Libya) and the Libya Shield which is made up of several militias of the same name that operate in various parts of the country.

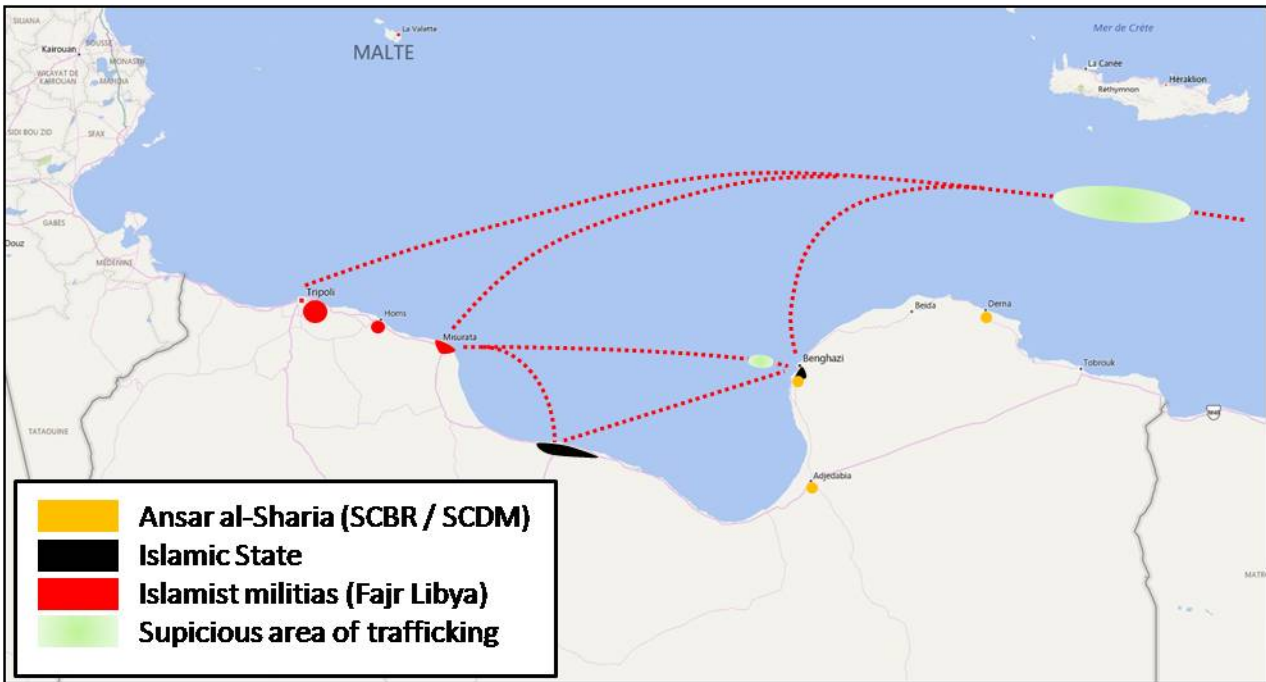


Figure 2: Supply maritime routes involved in illegal arms trafficking

Operational Update

The Operation Headquarters is manned at 85% by 159 people, of whom 99 are from the Host Nation (Italy) and 60 from other Member States (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, The Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom, as well as a Frontex Liaison Officer).

The Force Headquarters, deployed on-board the ITS GARIBALDI, is currently manned at 63% by 52 people, out of the 82 envisaged for complete manning, of whom 28 are from the Host Nation and 24 from other Member States (Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Lithuania, The Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, United Kingdom).

The total personnel of the Force, including the ships' companies, air detachments and logistical elements amounts to 2,266 personnel. In total, 25 Nations are contributing to the Operation with personnel, naval and air assets or funds.

I have requested the activation of Liaison Officer positions to Europol, NATO Allied Maritime Command (MARCOM) and the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) to further enhance cooperation, coordination and exchange of information. Pending formal decision of the Council, my intention is to establish a Liaison Officer with Interpol. I also have Liaison Officers deployed in EEAS, Frontex, UNSMIL and working visitors in Europol and MARCOM.

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There are still a number of key posts that need to be filled in the operation, including ACOS CJ MED in OHQ and ACOS CJ1 in FHQ. It is essential that Member States fill these posts as early as possible.

Phase 2A (High Seas)Activities

ENFM continued to operate in Phase 2A on the high seas throughout the reporting period. In doing so, the operation remained clearly focused on its core mandate to interdict migrant smugglers and human traffickers in international waters. An efficient rotation of units in the AOO ensured the operation's readiness to react to unforeseen events. The quieter period at the start of the year allowed further planning for subsequent phases of the operation, as well as preparations to manage the anticipated increase in arrivals in the spring commensurate with improving weather conditions.

At the start of the year the force was made up of six surface units that were committed to the core task.¹ This increased to nine after two supporting tasks were added to the mandate on 20 June. Out of these nine units, an average of three is dedicated to the arms embargo implementation, while two LPDs can be exclusively used for training². In total, ten nations contributed surface, sub surface and air assets during the reporting period (Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain and United Kingdom). These were deployed throughout the Area of Operations with airborne surveillance present across the southern end of the Lampedusa triangle providing real time queuing for the surface elements that were tactically deployed to spot escorts or jackals, particularly during dawn hours when most launches from Libya take place.

We continued to focus efforts on identifying and apprehending persons suspected of participating in migrant smuggling and human trafficking from Libya to Europe. During the reporting period, our activity contributed to 53 individuals being detained by Italian authorities suspected of having committed smuggling and trafficking crimes. For example, on 9 July, ENFM seized a skiff with three suspected smugglers on board. Ten days later two suspected smugglers, one of whom had been seen handling an assault rifle, were handed over to Italian judicial authorities by ENFM.

During the reporting period ENFM disposed of 269 boats (225 RB, 40 WB and 4 speed boats) used for migrant smuggling/human trafficking. Excellent communications were maintained with Italian MRCC, which continued to coordinate rescue operations to respond to Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) events. ENFM were involved in 154 SOLAS events, rescuing 20,980 migrants during the reporting period.

In order to ensure a correct approach when carrying rescue operations, ENFM adopted SOPs on treatment of persons rescued at sea and on preventing sexual exploitation and abuse. With support from several international organisations, the operation finalised a

¹ ITS GARIBALDI (IT), FGS BERLIN and WEILHEIM (DE), SNS TRIGLAV, ESPS CANARIAS (ES) and HMS ENTERPRISE (UK) which were supported by 4 fixed wing aircrafts: AC EMRAER (EL), AC SEAGULL (LU), AC ORION (ES) and augmented periodically by a Falcon 50 MPA (FR).

²ITS GARIBALDI, HMS ENTERPRISE, FS EV JACOBET, FGS MECKLENBURG-VORPOMMERN, ESPS NAVARRA, FGS MAIN, ITS SAN GIORGIO, HNLMS ROTTERDAM, RFA MOUNTS BAY. On the air front, the force consists of an ESP CN235, a FRA Falcon 50 MPA, a LUX Merlin III MPA and four ship-based helicopters (2 ITA, 1 ES and 1 UK).

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migrant handling training manual, which was made available to all personnel. The manual has a particular focus on vulnerable persons such as unaccompanied minors and women. The crews on our vessels continued to receive training in human rights and refugee law provided by UNHCR, IOM and OHCHR with whom close cooperation was maintained throughout the reporting period.

The Mediterranean remained a crowded space with NGOs, merchant traffic, coastguard and military operations operating around the same area. Incidents involving NGOs and vessels with the logo of the Libyan Coastguard took place on 17 August, 9 September and on 21 October. ENFM was called to support the NGO's on two of these occasions. Such incidents testify to the role of ENFM as a stabilising factor in the Mediterranean. It is evident that training the Libyan Navy and Coastguard, currently on-going on board ENFM naval assets, is essential to ensure that they can operate in accordance with the principles enshrined in international human rights and refugee law.

On 6 October, the derogatory regime established under UNSCR 2240 (2015) for the inspection, on the high seas off the Libyan coast, of vessels which there are reasonable grounds to suspect are being used for migrant smuggling or human trafficking from Libya was renewed for another year, through the adoption of UNSCR 2312 (2016). The extension was a technical roll-over with minimal changes to the Resolution, which acknowledged ENFM's training programme for the Libyan Navy and Coastguard with the UN Security Council reiterating its call for assistance to the Government of National Accord (GNA) for the development of capacity building activities. This call is explicitly addressed to the EU.

Extension of mandate and additional tasks

On 20 June, one month after a letter welcoming the EU's intention to contribute to the training of the Libyan Coastguard and Navy had been received by the HR/VP from the President of the Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord, Fayez Serraj, the Council extended the mandate of ENFM until 27 July 2017 and strengthened it by adding two tasks to support the achievement of the operation's core mandate and to contribute to broader security in support of the legitimate Libyan authorities.³

On 30 August, the PSC authorised ENFM to commence capacity building and training of the Libyan Coastguard and Navy, based on a request by the legitimate Libyan authorities taking into account the need for Libyan ownership. One week later, on 6 September, a PSC decision was issued authorising ENFM to start contributing to information sharing, as well as implementation of the UN arms embargo on the high seas off the coast of Libya on the basis of relevant UN Security Council Resolutions, including UNCSR 2292 (2016).

To enable this, the force was augmented by Member States. The aforesaid Resolution 2292(2016) was adopted on 14 June 2016, authorising UN Member States, acting individually or through regional organizations, to implement the arms embargo on the high seas off the Libyan coast.

³Council Decision (CFSP) 2016/993.

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Countering Illegal Arms Trafficking (CIAT)

From the beginning of July, ENFM started to intensively prepare for Countering Illegal Arms Trafficking (CIAT). I instructed staff to organise a series of four exercises starting on 30 August with the last one held on 27 September. Two exercises were cases of unopposed boarding, one non-cooperative boarding and finally an opposed boarding exercise. The aim of the exercises was to ensure that OHQ and FHQ personnel were fully trained to perform their duties related to visit, board, search and seize (VBSS) in line with ENFM internal procedures.

Supporting criteria for identifying suspect vessels are explained in the relevant standard operating procedures (SOP). In considering the list of weapons or related materiel covered by the arms embargo against Libya, ENFM referred to the already existing EU law provisions concerning the enforcement of the same embargo on the EU territory, namely Council Regulation (EU) 2016/44. According to Council Regulation 2016/44, the items covered by the embargo are:

- the materiel included in the Common Military List of the European Union
- those which are not included in the Common Military List but that might nevertheless be used for internal repression, whose list is enclosed in Annex I to the Regulation.

An SOP was adopted on 30 June to establish a proper procedure for requesting Flag State consent prior to inspection of suspect vessels under UNSCR 2292 (2016). A new list of points of contact for submitting inspection requests was also developed as well as a new reporting procedure to submit initial and final reports to the UN Sanctions Committee established pursuant to UNSCR 1970 (2011) as set out in UNSCR 2292 (2016). According to the procedure agreed with the EEAS, once a report is received from the FHQ, the OHQ will submit it to the Chairman of the EUMC, who will in turn send it to the EEAS. The latter will forward the report to the EU Delegation in NY for transmission to the Chair of the UN Sanctions Committee.

ENFM started the implementation of the task on 13 September initially with two ships permanently tasked to patrol the eastern part of the Area of Operations. Implementation of the new task did not reduce the number of vessels directly involved in the core mission, as two surface vessels that had been operating in associated support were integrated into the force solely for CIAT tasking. This has ensured that ENFM can have a minimum of one naval asset operating within the CIAT surveillance areas at all times. The force was split between two key focal points: north of Derna to monitor the Inter-Theatre route into the AOO; and the Gulf of Sirte, to monitor the Intra-Theatre and inshore activity.

Inspections are carried out only on vessels bound to or from Libya which the Operation have reasonable grounds to believe are carrying arms or related materiel to or from Libya, directly or indirectly, in violation of the arms embargo. On 14 September, the operation boarded a vessel of interest in full compliance with international law of the sea and UNSCR 2292 (2016), without causing undue interference or delay to the boarded vessel.

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Throughout the initial weeks of implementation, standard practices were refined through consultations between the FHQ and the OHQ, including through issuance of further instructions on carrying out diversions to the Port of Diversion which is in Marseille, France.

To date, Operation Sophia units have hailed/queried 93 vessels, conducted 6 flag requests and visits and 1 vessel inspection. No breach of the arms embargo has been uncovered.

We continued to acquire vital intelligence about the patterns of life along the Libyan coastline and in the Gulf of Sirte, and after two months of executing the new task there is increasing awareness among merchant shipping and fishing communities of the presence of ENFM and its role in implementing the UN arms embargo, which in itself provides a significant deterrence effect for arms smugglers.

Given that this is an intelligence driven task, the current absence of EU resources providing maritime intelligence about individual vessel and cargo movements is restricting our ability to execute fully the arms embargo and limiting optimum deployment of the assets in the AOO. In particular, without the ability to build a picture outside the AOO, we cannot gather information about the main arms routes coming from the East. Additionally, arms smugglers still have the possibility to cross into territorial waters off the coast of Egypt and into Libya thus avoiding ENFM interdiction which can only be done on the high seas. Although intelligence sharing is improving, enhanced links with other actors in the AOO remain key for the successful execution of this task. To that end, the decision by NATO Defence Ministers on 27 October that the new Operation Sea Guardian will help increase the EU's situational awareness is welcome.

Additionally, another port of diversion would support the operation and significantly reduce transit times.

As of November, an opposed boarding team from DE, on board FGS MAIN, will provide ENFM the capability to conduct opposed boarding from early November. This will increase the Force capability and broaden the ENFM operational posture.

Training the Libyan Navy and Naval Coastguard

The Council Decision of 20 June indicated the launch of the preparatory stage of the training, with a PSC decision required ahead of formal approval to launch the execution stage. In line with operational planning, a Senior Officers Team consisting of male and female ENFM experts was formed to lead the training preparations.

On 28 June, a seven member Libyan Committee of Experts was appointed by Libyan Minister of Defence designate Barghati marking the start of technical consultations between the operation and the Libyan Navy and Coastguard representatives on the Committee. After rounds of consultations held in Rome and in Tunis, on 23 August in Rome, I signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the double-hatted Head of the Libyan Committee of Experts/Chief of the Libyan Coastguard. The MoU outlines the criteria and requirements for the Libyan participants in the training and outlines the content of the training packages.

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At the beginning of October, a list of 81 names of Libyan trainees and five national support staff was handed over from the Committee of Experts in order to start the vetting process. I would like to underline the remarkable efforts made by the Libyan Committee of Experts in challenging circumstances to identify suitable trainees, which demonstrates their real commitment to this training. I signed an internal standard operating procedure on vetting, and the vetting was done with support from several Member States, Europol, and UNSMIL. All 81 candidates passed the vetting and were approved for training, confirming that the identification work done by the Libyan Committee of Experts had been extremely reliable. On the day of embarkation on 26 October, 78 trainees (three did not show up due to personal reasons) and 5 national support staff were embarked on board the IT LPD SAN GIORGIO to start the training. In my consultations with the Committee of Experts, equal participation in training was particularly encouraged. Regrettably, no female participation in the training could be obtained due to lack of female Navy and Coastguard personnel. A final report, including the lessons learned of the whole process of vetting, will be delivered to the Chairman of the EUMC for consideration.

Funding for the training was provided through direct financial contributions made by individual Member States (LU, CY, SK, CZ, MT and SL). The 14-week training is a multi-national effort carried out by instructors from several Member States (BE, EL, DE, IT and UK) on board the IT LPD SAN GIORGIO and the NL LPD ROTTERDAM. Training teams from UNHCR and FRONTEX are in charge of modules on human rights and refugee law and law enforcement respectively. The training is strictly limited to coastguard and law enforcement functions. While this first training package focuses on a “train-the-trainers” approach subsequent packages are intended for “on the job training” in a Member State training centre and operational sea training on board Libyan Naval Coastguard vessels.

Also local media were present on the day of embarkation and the trainees and the support staff clearly demonstrated their commitment to make a very good impression. They all arrived on time, in uniform and, once on board, quickly adapted to the new environment. The feedback has been very positive: the trainees are motivated and eager to develop their skills and an ambitious training routine has been set up with the trainees and the support staff. A good relationship with the crews and the training teams has rapidly been formed, allowing the creation of a productive working environment.

Support to Operations

Communication and Information System (CIS)

Further to the mission-tailored control and command structure already in place, ENFM’s communication and information system (CIS) was enhanced through closer cooperation with EU agencies as well as significant efforts of the host nation. The FRONTEX JORA system was a key resource for migration related information, while the installation of EUROPOL’s SIENA network significantly boosted exchange capabilities regarding law enforcement related information. The SIENA network was also used in the communications with EUROPOL related to the vetting process. Close cooperation with FRONTEX continued and they provided VTC Tandberg Systems to ENFM OHQ and EU Rear Task Force Catania. Preparatory measures were taken to incorporate EU SATCOM

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services to ensure higher bandwidth capacities. The agreement between the European Maritime Security Agency (EMSA) and ENFM was extended, which will allow the operation to draw upon EMSA resources, such as ISR capabilities.

The operation also implemented services offered by the European Defence Agency, including Marsur networking products, as part of a comprehensive approach in the field of CIS, which resulted in a significant enhancement of maritime situational awareness capabilities and enhanced interoperability and co-operation with other military and civilian maritime authorities.

Training sessions in the field of cyber awareness supported the development of a common understanding of cyber threats, including knowledge of techniques and procedures to be followed to provide a proper response to mitigate risks in order to ensure compliance with EU concepts and regulations as well as with SOP/ SOIs.

The host nation supported a well-organised structure to maintain the operational tempo and ensured smooth “INCHOP/OUTCHOP” procedures for force elements, as well as close co-ordination with CIS authorities.

As part of the ongoing establishment of a Maritime Security Capacity in the framework of the Shared Awareness and De-confliction in the Mediterranean (SHADE MED) forum, ENFM significantly enhanced its technical capabilities in terms of provision of a common operational picture and situational awareness capabilities, in particular related to maritime situational awareness by a range of improvements introduced in the reporting period. For example, the Classified Mission Network was extended and CIS services provided to seconded ENFM personnel in the mission theatre.

The classified network BICES was installed in OHQ and FHQ on board the Italian flagship enhancing the technical capacity to exchange information with EU Member States, partners and third states. The system will enable exchange of information in accordance with EU rules and the principle of inclusiveness and reciprocity.

The unclassified collaboration platform SMART, a Mercury-like CIS system, was adapted to meet operational requirements. SMART is capable to fuse maritime domain information and distribute it to a wide audience and could be used as part of a wider Maritime Security Capacity in the OHQ. This system is designed to enable information sharing between us, NATO, FRONTEX, national organisations and maritime shipping industries in order to enhance situational awareness, de-confliction, coordination as well as improvement of rescue operations in terms of aviation safety and effectiveness in rescue activities by usage of commercial secure services.

A working visit of ENFM to FRONTEX HQ in Warsaw was conducted on 22 September in which complementarities and sequencing of SMART and EUROSUR Fusion Services were discussed. SMART will work as the main communication and information exchange channel in the training of the Libyan Navy and Naval Coastguard until further notice. SMART is already being gradually augmented by EUROSUR, starting with FRONTEX METEO services, which will be made available to the Libyan Navy and Naval Coastguard

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through a technical interface of SMART. EUROSUR could then be a complimentary system for information exchange, having an operational picture and situational awareness.

Logistic Support

ENFM remains logistically well supported by the Forward Logistic Base (FLB) in the Italian Naval Base Augusta, the Forward Logistic Site (FLS) in the Italian Air Base Pantelleria and the Forward Operating Base (FOB) in the Italian Air Base Sigonella. The FLB, FLS and FOB are situated within the Joint Operations Area (JOA), included in the ENFM Command and Control (C2) and manned by FHQ staff. The FLB and FOB constitute the main operational logistics hubs of the operation. In the reporting period infrastructure works at FLB Augusta and at FLS Pantelleria were completed, providing improved logistic facilities for the operation. The Logistic Support Technical Agreement signed between ENFM and the Italian Ministry of Defence is a thorough base for the provision of these services.

Greece provided additional valuable logistic sites in Crete outside of the JOA at the FLS Souda and FOB Chania.

As regards the supporting tasks, the logistical preparation for the first Training Package was finalised successfully with the required logistics support described in detail in the MoU signed on 23 Aug (Article 6 and Annex E). Furthermore, following a visit of an ENFM delegation to Marseille in October, logistical issues concerning the use of the port of diversion in Marseille and the relevant procedures are being agreed with French authorities.

On 27 October, NATO Defence Ministers decided that the new Operation Sea Guardian will provide logistical support to ENFM.

Medical Support

The medical support to ENFM is provided by a Role 1 Medical Treatment Facility (MTF) on each vessel. On 1 June, the Role 2 Basic afloat MTF on board of ITS CAVOUR was replaced by a Role 1 MTF on board of ITS GARIBALDI. The latter can provide a Role 1 MTF augmented by additional capabilities in the domains of dental care, diagnostics and stress management, but there is no surgical capability.

One of the main principles of medical health support stipulates that surgery should ideally be provided within “the golden hour”. If not feasible, it is commonly agreed that the minimal standard is: 1) enhanced first aid within 10 minutes of wounding, 2) damage control resuscitation within one hour of wounding, 3) damage control surgery no later than two hours of wounding.

Although the likelihood of a severe injury or disease is assessed as low, this probability will increase with the intensification of CIAT operations and the arrival of the opposed boarding capability. Starting from November, the DE opposed boarding team on board FGS Main will provide medical treatment facility capabilities, which entail damage control surgery and are able to sustain medical support to conduct special operations up to opposite boarding.

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Nevertheless, the availability of Role 2 afloat would be the best solution to provide medical care to all ENMF personnel afloat across the Area of Operation. It will give the commander the highest freedom of movement, with the lowest possible medical risk.

Casualty evacuation (CASEVAC) is conducted by Rotary Wings (two on the ITS GARIBALDI and one on ESPS NAVARRA).

Role 3 MTF is provided by hospitals in Catania (Italy), Msida (Malta) and Souda/Heraklion (Greece). In case of medical emergencies that cannot be handled with ENFM means (in the event of missing or overwhelmed capabilities or when the distance to the nearest EU hospital does not meet the EU standard timelines for medical cure) Egyptian and Tunisian hospitals could allow alignment of medical care with the agreed minimal standards for EU military operations. To that end, draft Administrative Arrangements for using the military hospitals in Alexandria and Tunis as ROLE 3 Medical Treatment Facilities have been sent to the Egyptian and Tunisian authorities through the EU Delegations in Cairo and Tunis. Following my visit to Cairo in July, and a technical assessment done at the hospital in Alexandria, technical discussions with Egyptian authorities are expected to be initialised this year.

Medical support to the OHQ continues to be provided by the infirmary of the Centocelle Base (Role 1 MTF) and by the Celio Military Hospital in Rome (Role 3 MTF), in accordance with a Technical Agreement with the Italian Ministry of Defence.

Outreach Activities

I have continued to place focus on consolidating relationships and share important mission related information with key international and regional actors. This has helped maintain support for the operation, even with the addition of the two supporting tasks. To this end, during the reporting period, I have made particular efforts to explain the new mandate and what ENFM is doing in terms of training the Libyan Naval Coastguard and implementation of the UNSCR 2292 (2016). In order to enhance our operational understanding, I will also soon sign agreements on cooperation with INTERPOL and UNODC.

Cooperation within the EU and with international organisations

Cooperation within the EU on Libyan Coastguard training was carried out through coordination meetings under the leadership of the EEAS and the Commission. Such meetings provided essential opportunities to sequence activities together with Frontex, EUBAM Libya and others.

The support from European and international partners was also important in the vetting of the Libyan Naval Coastguard trainees, which was done together with EUROPOL, UNSMIL and a number of EU Member States.

Consultation with UNODC led to the finalization of a draft working arrangement which will be signed at the end of November 2016. The purpose of this arrangement is to provide a stable framework for cooperation and to facilitate collaboration, especially in the fields of

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information sharing and organisation of training activities. UNODC has an extensive experience of, and it is involved in most of, current state-building programmes in fragile States. Any future collaboration with UNODC could be valuable in solving the “legal finish issue” in Libya.

In September, two meetings with members of the UN Panel of Experts established pursuant Resolution 1973 (2011) took place in Brussels and Rome. During the meetings the Panel members noted that ENFM’s training programme could violate the arms embargo against Libya. According to the OHQ’s legal assessment, agreed with the EEAS, the training programme does not fall within the arms embargo against Libya, as it is not “related to military activities” (as provided for in UNSCR 1970 (2011), but instead focused on coast guard functions only. In addition, it is intended solely for security assistance to the Libyan government and does not require any prior notification to or exemption from the Sanctions Committee under UNSCR 2095 (2013), (being already “sanctions compliant”).

Nevertheless, during my discussions at the UN in September the need emerged for ENFM to brief the UN Sanction Committee about our current activities as regards the implementation of the arms embargo. I was advised to present our activities to the Committee as ENFM is at present the only implementer of the arms embargo against Libya on the high seas. This is in line with the spirit of transparency and sharing of information that I have applied so far and should assist in creating fruitful relations with the Committee.

In the meantime, good and direct contacts with the Secretariat of UN Sanctions Committee have been established both to safeguard that a reliable reporting mechanism is set up and to request that the Operation may receive all relevant information in case exemption requests are granted by the Sanctions Committee according to UNSCR 2278 (2016).

Contacts were also established with the International Criminal Court (ICC), whose investigators asked for the operation’s support for gathering relevant information on the commission of crimes against humanity/war crimes in Libya. The collaboration with the ICC is deemed valuable for the operation, given the Court’s relations with police and judicial authorities in Libya and their vast amount of information on individuals possibly involved in international crimes in Libya and beyond. The latter could be useful in vetting the Libyan candidates and in general in the execution of the CIAT task.

In view of a possible Council Decision amendment, I have also discussed possible areas of cooperation and constraints with INTERPOL. A permanent cooperation mechanism would permit regularly exchanging information, thus supporting an enhanced situational awareness and an improved understanding of the organised criminal groups involved in smuggling and trafficking to/from Libya. When the legal framework allows, I intend to establish a liaison officer exchange and to explore further cooperation with Interpol through a National Central Bureau of a Member State.

Shared Awareness and De-confliction in Mediterranean (SHADEMED)

Building on an extensive network of contacts, I have continued the Shared Awareness and De-confliction in the Mediterranean (SHADE MED) forum throughout the reporting period

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having held the first meeting in Rome on 26 November 2015. The second meeting was hosted by the Italian Navy on 12-13 May 2016 and was attended by over 145 representatives from 74 different organisations ranging from Governments and Armed Forces, International and NGOs, all involved in responding to the challenges of irregular migration across the Mediterranean Sea. The next meeting will be hosted by JFC Naples on 7-8 November. It will be chaired by MARCOM, whilst ENFM will continue to provide the permanent secretariat.

The meetings contributed to a better understanding between civilian and military actors, enhancing mutual interaction and assisting in the development of an overall framework for coordination different activities and to identify best practices to deal with common security challenges. We have continued to actively pursue the working groups that were agreed as part of this initiative. The aim of the working groups is to further develop options for countering migration in the Med by bringing together regional actors, shipping companies, military organisations and IO/NGOs and generate a coherent approach to the problems facing us. The working groups will seek to identify and propose solutions to common issues and challenges and in moving forward.

Sharing Information and Intelligence

Procedures and protocols for exchanging information with partners and agencies forms part of my key leader engagement strategy and has been actively progressed throughout this reporting period. We are working hand-in-glove with EUMS and have now successfully installed BICES in the OHQ and FHQ. A working visitor will also be deployed to AFRICOM from November 2016 with a full Liaison Officer post established from January 2017, pending EUMC formal approval to transform the position into a permanent LNO. Joint de-confliction and coordination initiatives are also being developed with MARCOM to agree on information that can be shared on a bilateral and multinational basis and the appropriate handling procedures.

Campaign Assessment

Campaign Effectiveness Assessment has been conducted since the beginning of the operation to evaluate mission progress, facilitate decision-making and improve the quality and effectiveness of operational planning and execution. The Military Strategic Effects (MSE) have been designed to reach the Military Strategic Objectives (MSO) for the three Lines of Engagement in the Campaign Plan.

MSO 1: Situational Awareness and Understanding Achieved

This MSO is reached in Phase 2A on the high seas through the achievement of MSE (4) – the “Business Model of Smugglers and Traffickers is identified”. This is assessed to have improved somewhat to 70% complete. ENFM has a reasonably clear picture within the AOO of smuggler and trafficker networks, pattern of life and financing. Lack of surface and ISR assets hinder our ability to have full coverage of the AOO. As we do not have a mandate to operate beyond the AOO, we have an important gap in situational awareness along the Libyan Coastline within territorial waters.

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MSO 2: Migrant vessels and enabling assets are neutralised ideally before they are used by traffickers or smugglers

We are focusing our efforts on MSE (5) – “smugglers/traffickers capabilities (enabling assets and vessels) are degraded”. This is assessed to be at 30% achieved as we have disposed of 337 vessels used for smuggling, which has resulted in a drop in the usage of wooden boats. The availability of wooden boats is reducing and construction of new boats of very poor quality is limited to a number of locations along the Libyan coast known to ENFM. Meanwhile, the use of rubber boats has increased.

MSO 3: Contribution to the EU Comprehensive Approach to persuade migrants and deter smugglers and traffickers from crossing the Mediterranean Sea

In Phase 2 the target is to accomplish MSE (7) the “EEAS information strategy supported by an effective Info Ops campaign” is assessed to be at 35% complete. By rescuing migrants at sea in line with international law, ENFM is a demonstration of the EU’s commitment to save lives and preserve human rights. Outreach remains a fundamental part of the operation and a coherent messaging has been developed for both public and non-public communication, while Op Sophia has achieved a medium-high interest from all main international media outlets. The presence of the operation on the high seas, the apprehension of suspected migrant smugglers and human traffickers and the destruction of every smuggling vessel supports the overall EEAS information strategy.

Next Steps and Key Challenges

Information Sharing

The launch of Sea Guardian in areas complementary to ENFM will be a test bed to intensify relationships and apply the principles agreed in the joint EU-NATO declaration in Warsaw. Positive engagement that I have had with MARCOM has already shed light on areas of de-confliction and coordination, including support in information exchange beyond ENFM’s AOO through a joint situational awareness picture.

With regard to the issue of sharing classified, privileged and personal information with external entities (third States not associated to the operation, international organisations and agencies), I requested for a legal assessment and possibly a revision of the legal framework as established in our mandate, in order to meet our most pressing operational requirements in accordance with EU rules and the principle of inclusiveness and reciprocity. This includes granting the protection of personal data collected, stored and shared by ENFM in the implementation of its mandate.

With regard to the protection of personal data, an internal policy is being drafted by the operation jointly with the EEAS. In order to address all the remaining issues concerning information sharing a new draft Council Decision amending the norms on information sharing included in the Operation’s current mandate was proposed by the EEAS.

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Funding for further training

The commencement of Package 1 training on 26 October marks a significant milestone for Op SOPHIA as we move forward. Observations thus far suggest that the trainees already embarked in SAN GIORGIO and ROTTERDAM are keen to improve and recover their original capability. Recent meetings held with the Head of the Libyan Committee of Experts/Chief of the Libyan Coastguard, have resulted in requests to repeat Package 1 for a further 81 trainees from the Coast Guard's Eastern sector. This is particularly encouraging since it points to the potential to standardise operational procedures across the coastguard units. This is the first time the Chief of the Libyan Coastguard has specifically requested to cooperate with the East and could therefore be an important sign of a new will to move toward building a capacity across the Libyan coast. Although the three eastern sectors are part of the Coastguard, I estimate that the vetting would probably be more difficult as there are less frequent contact with these sectors of the Libyan Coastguard.

Similarly, I received a request from the Libyan Committee of Experts to include in the current training an additional 17 trainees who could constitute two crews of Libyan Patrol Boats. This request can be met by incorporating this training within the current training schedule and I am confident that we can proceed starting in the beginning of December.

Furthermore, ambitions are very positive for Package 2, the first element of which is envisaged to commence Crete delivered by Greek Navy training teams. However, a sustainable and clear funding mechanism should be agreed without delay in order to allow for the timelines for training to be met. It would be incongruous to allow Package 1 to be successfully funded and delivered only to subsequently fail to agree on the commitment to Package 2 and would be the cause of significant disappointment to the Libyan's and could be harmful to the close ties already developed. Engagement thus far has proved highly successful, especially at the senior level where continued focused effort has developed strong personal relationships with fellow military heads. Ultimately the success of the Libyan Naval Coastguard training is the fastest way to deliver significant effect in reducing migrant flows and intercepting the smuggler activities in TTW and in the regular departure points.

It is recognised that a degree of risk is inevitable in delivering the training and Op SOPHIA has taken every step in detailed planning to ensure that once all three Packages have been delivered the LNCG will become an efficient and sustainable 'force for good' in the region. This type of risk is not specific to Op SOPHIA but could be read across to any capacity building operation.

The Legal Finish

Without the possibility of progressing the operation to the next phases and commencing operations inside Libyan TTW, efforts to disrupt the smuggler and trafficker business model will continue to be limited to the disposal of boats and the apprehension of only those suspects that venture outside the 'safe haven' of TTW. Since it is understood that a move into the Libyan Territorial Waters will require a formal invitation from the recognised Libyan authorities and an agreed UNSCR, the operational focus will be on training the

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Libyan Navy and Coastguard in order to allow them to more effectively police their own waters.

No particular changes in the “legal finish issue” took place since January this year. The formal legal framework to operate within the Libyan TTW is clear. The operation needs:

- a request for assistance put forward by the Libyan Government;
- a formal authorisation from the UN Security Council through a dedicated resolution (as was the case with Somalia); and
- a Council Decision.

None of these conditions are in place at this stage. Nevertheless, under a more substantial point of view, what it is also missing is a viable solution to the problem of the legal finish for suspect criminals apprehended by ENFM units in the Libyan TTW, namely within the Libyan territorial jurisdiction. In the current circumstances, by applying the non-refoulement principle, if an ENFM unit apprehends suspect individuals within the Libyan TTW, they should be released.

There are two different solutions to the problem: 1) EU conclude a transfer agreement with Libya that authorizes the handover of suspect individuals to Libya, but only if the conditions of the Libyan judicial/penitentiary system are improved, so that the latter may be deemed consistent with European human rights standards or 2) Libya and one or more EU MS conclude an international agreement which may allow the suspects to be handed over to such countries and the latter to exercise their criminal jurisdiction over facts occurred in the Libyan TTW.

The first option would require efforts by all relevant international stakeholders involved in the state-building process in Libya and may be seen as a long-term solution. The second option may instead be considered as a medium-term solution, although it would be sensitive, since it implies the GNA ceding sovereignty and would require considerable efforts by the EU.

Conclusions

With a clear focus on the core mandate to tackle smuggling and trafficking networks, we continued to provide a deterrence effect preventing smugglers from operating in international waters. During the reporting period, and as of 31 October 2016, the operation had contributed to the apprehension of 53 smugglers and destruction of 269 boats.

Meanwhile, the addition of two supporting tasks represented a strengthened opportunity for the operation to achieve its core mission. I have capitalised on the training by building confidence with our Libyan counterparts, which will be key to address the irregular migration flows from Libya and for transitioning to the next phases of the operation.

After one and half year of operation it is evident that the end state can be reached provided that the GNA and the Libyan population truly want to contribute to disrupt the migrant smuggling networks. This is the centre of gravity and the Operation will soon start a revision process to take that into account, based on the experience gained so far.

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ENFM is only a small piece of the big puzzle that need to be looked at and is part of the Comprehensive approach, but it is necessary that all efforts are synchronized and coordinated. We need to cooperate if we are to fully address the migrant smuggling and human trafficking from Libyan shores, and training Libyan government forces is a clear step in the right direction. The trainees come from all over Tripolitania, including the main launching areas along the Libyan coast. We are thus enhancing the awareness and skills among those who have the best local knowledge, giving us the best chance to have an impact in the area where smuggling takes place. By building Libyan coastguard capacities more lives will be saved in territorial waters. Putting an end to illegal activity could also allow more legitimate activities to take space.

Nevertheless, a clear and sustainable funding mechanism needs to be put in place to allow the operation to progress in training in line with its operational planning. The structure of training is composed of packages where the final execution depends on training needs assessment, evaluation and Libyan will. It should therefore not to be considered as a rigid structure, but must be flexible to reach the end state of improving security in the Libyan territorial waters and return irregular migration at a manageable level.

From a military perspective, I remain ready to move into the Libyan Territorial Waters where we can make a more significant impact on the migrant smugglers and human traffickers' business model. However, it is clear that the legal and political pre-conditions have not been met, and a viable solution to the problem of the legal finish needs to be found at EU level.

Accurate, timely and robust intelligence support is one of the critical requirements for the Operation to succeed. Due to the dimension of the AOO and the scarce assets allocated to it, information sharing has to improve if we are to optimise operational effectiveness in implementing the arms embargo task. Opportunities to exploit the presence of other assets in the region, as well as de-confliction and coordination between Operation Sophia and Sea Guardian will be valuable to this end.

As Operation Commander, I have continued my outreach programme to keep engaging key interlocutors. One part of this is the SHADE MED, which is gathering an increasingly large participation. The aim of these fora remains in increasing the mutual understanding between civilian and military actors in the Mediterranean, allowing enhanced interaction, coordinated development of an overall framework and identification of best practices related to common security challenges. The network of contacts has allowed us to maintain good relations with the NGO community at all levels. It has also ensured continued support from regional and international actors as the operation has evolved.

Lastly, it is worth recalling that the operation has to date completed the rescue of nearly 29,317 migrants (4724 female and 1701 minors), recovering them to a place of safety. The operation has also disposed of 337 smuggling vessels preventing them from being re-used and 99 suspected migrant smugglers/human traffickers have been arrested following information provided or action taken by the Operation.

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EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia is the first EU Naval Force to operate in the Mediterranean, an area of key strategic importance to the EU and at the centre of security challenges impacting Europe as a whole. It is a flexible and highly capable instrument that, by its presence alone, enhances security in the Mediterranean. ENFM has become a multi-faceted Maritime Security Operation carrying out a range of tasks from Maritime Situational Awareness, to capacity building and law enforcement while building an extensive network of contacts; all furthering the achievement of the mission objective.

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