



## HEADQUARTERS, ALLIED MARITIME COMMAND

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### MONTHLY NEWSLETTER NATO MARCOM FEBRUARY 2019.

As we are well into February it is already clear that 2019 will be a very busy year for MARCOM and NATO Maritime Forces. The four Standing NATO Maritime Groups (SNMGs) were assembled in their dedicated ports in January and in early February commenced deployment into their allocated operating areas in Northern and Southern European waters respectively. Their overall task is to enhance maritime safety through NATO naval presence at sea.

It has also been a flying start to the year for the NATO Shipping Centre, both in contributing to exercises, as well as focusing on potential problem areas for shipping (e.g. the Sea of Azov and Kerch Strait developments). This keeps the staff and watch standers occupied.

#### Maritime Security Operations

During January a total of 64 warships from NATO Nations participated in Operation Sea Guardian (OSG) providing support to this key security operation in the Mediterranean. In addition a total of 47 sorties by NATO Airborne Early Warning (AEW) and Maritime Patrol Aircraft (MPA) were flown in direct support of the operation. These airborne assets are understandably significant contributors to NATO establishing Maritime Situational Awareness (MSA) in the challenging environment the Mediterranean provides. The AEW flights are provided by NATO's own assets while the MPA flights were provided by Greece, Spain, Turkey, France and USA. Submarines under NATO and national operational command also operate in support of OSG providing inputs from the important sub-surface dimension.

Overall OSG continues to be a significant enhancement of NATO MSA in the Mediterranean and increases the Alliance' understanding of the Maritime Pattern of Life (MPoL) as the basis for detecting anomalies and support to counter terrorism efforts.

#### Standing Naval Maritime Groups

Standing Naval Maritime Group 1 (SNMG-1) will for 2019 be under US Navy command and the Group Commander has hoisted his ensign onboard the flagship USS Gravelly (DDG 107) supported by the Polish frigate ORP General Kazimerz Pulaski and the German auxiliary ship FGS Spessart. The Group departed Copenhagen after the Change of Command ceremony on 12 January where Danish Commodore Anders Friis at the end of his tour after a challenging and rewarding year for SNMG1 under Danish Command. SNMG1 is currently busy undertaking operational training and MSA tasks in the Baltic and North Sea. Standing Naval Maritime Group

## NATO UNCLASSIFIED

2 (SNMG-2) Tactical Unit 1 (TU 01) has commenced their deployment and operations in the Aegean Sea. The Primary task is supporting the efforts of the EU, Greece, and Turkey to control migration. SNMG-2 TU 01 is commanded from German frigate FGS Bonn and also consists of the Greek patrol vessels HS Kasos, HS Troupakis and HS Kalypso, the Albanian patrol vessel ALS Butrinti and the Turkish warship TCG Karsiyaka. When sightings of immigrant boats are done (two such boats detected in January) their movements are reported to local authorities for further action.



SNMG-2 Tactical Unit 2 (TU 02) was reassembled in Palma (Spain) in mid-January and commenced transit to the Eastern Mediterranean. The flagship is now the Dutch frigate HNLMS Evertsen with the Canadian frigate HMCS Toronto. The Spanish frigate ESPS Santa Maria and the Turkish frigate TCG Gelibolu make up the remainder of the group. During the transit from the Western to Eastern Mediterranean, SNMG1 TU 02 carried out training activities and MSA tasks and en route visited Souda Bay (Crete) and Mersin (Turkey). During the transit an opportunity was utilized to train with the Hellenic Navy.

Standing Naval Mine Counter Measures Group 1 (SNMCMG-1) has since mid- January been under Danish command executed from the Mine Countermeasure Vessel (MCMV) HDMS Thetis, with the Belgian minehunter BMS Bellis and the German minehunters FGS Homburg and FGS Diilingen. Having departed Copenhagen the Group proceeded towards Zeebrugge for two weeks of training and improving their mine countermeasure capabilities.

SNMCMG-2, composed only of the German FGS Werra (flagship) departed her German homeport in late January and set sail for the Mediterranean. Training activities are being carried out underway and the unit will be joined by Turkish, Bulgarian and Romanian units in preparations for a Black Sea deployment.

### **MARCOM exercises**

MARCOM in January/February executed the Computer Assisted Exercise (CAX) Dynamic Move (DYME19) to train SNMCMG1 and NATO Staffs in MCM procedures. DYME is a tactical level exercise arranged by the NATO Mine Countermeasures School (EGUERMIN) in Oostende, Belgium. More than 160 naval personnel from 21 NATO and Partner nations participated to improve management of mine clearance operations and conduct Naval Coordination and Guidance for Shipping (NCGAS) procedures in protection of Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs).



Exercise DYNAMIC MOVE 19 Participants

### **MARCOM engagements**

Egypt is one of the seven countries involved in the NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue. MARCOM and Egyptian staff met in Alexandria in February to further develop relationships and discuss ways of sharing information. Topics on the agenda during the meeting were; Training and exercise Opportunities, support to OSG, submarine water space cooperation and submarine rescue.

Also in February MARCOM Staff will meet representatives from the Colombian Navy to address the possible participation and contribution to NATO Operations and training activities, including OSG, and the Operational Partnership Process.

### **NATO Shipping Centre (NSC) Updates**

NSC Staff attended the NCAGS and AWNIS Training and Coordination Advisory Team (NATCAT) meeting in Delft (Netherlands) from 16th to 18th of January. This annual event provides a forum with the aim of improving coordination and cooperation of all NCAGS and AWNIS NATO national teams in procedures, exercises and training.

This meeting was followed by the Allied Maritime and Shipping Group (AMSG), from 21 to 24 January, also held in Delft, under the chairmanship of the NSC Director. The AMSG reviewed the current and future challenges of NATO NCAGS operations.

The NSC continues monitoring the situation in the Kerch Strait and Sea of Azov and the impact the activities are having on shipping in the area.

GPS jamming continues to be present in areas of the Eastern Mediterranean. As a result the NSC, in cooperation with US MARAD, continues encouraging all ships to report incidents of GPS jamming or interference in areas of the Eastern Mediterranean. This reporting enables MARCOM to maintain overall awareness of cyber issues that may affect security or safety of navigation. The assessment sent with October's newsletter remains valid and up-to-date.

Merchant ships are also encouraged to report any suspicious activity in the Mediterranean Sea and broader North Atlantic Region to the NSC to support NSC and MARCOMs understanding of MSA and the threats to shipping.

*Ben Lofstad*

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