

Rafał Wordliczek

THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA AREA AND AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY IN THE WAR AGAINST TERRORISM

The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence recognised by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area.

Article 5 of The North Atlantic Treaty

The terrorist attacks in New York and Washington D.C on September 11th, 2001 changed the world and opened a new chapter in the war against terrorism. A war against terrorism is an ambiguous problem. One of the most important areas of this fight is the Mediterranean Sea region. On October 6th, 2001 according to article no. 5 of the Washington Treaty, NATO sent its own Navy to eastern part of this area. Later on the mission was labeled Active Endeavour. The article's objectives are threefold: (1) priorities of this military operation, (2) role of the Mediterranean area in American foreign policy agenda, and (3) U.S. relations with European partners in the Mediterranean region. One example of European support for NATO's action is the Italian admiral Roberto Cesaretti's report. Admiral Cesaretti indicates the necessity of strong cooperation between Europe and the United States in the Mediterranean Sea region in the mission Active Endeavour. In his opinion the success of the operation is connected with Euro-American collaboration. On the other hand, there are European politicians who do not support European countries' involvement in the mission Active Endeavour.

¹ NATO Review, *Combating Terrorism in the Mediterranean*, www.afsouth.nato.int/JFCN/Operations/ActiveEndeavour/Endeavour.htm, Dec. 9, 2007.

What is the definition of the Mediterranean region? The commonly held belief is that from the geographical point of view the area consists of the following countries: Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, Montenegro, Albania, Greece, Turkey, Cyprus, Malta, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Palestinian Authority, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco. This area is not uniform; some countries are members of the European Union, others are members of the African League, some are well-developed, others have serious economic problems. From a political point of view the region consists of the above countries and as well as Jordan, Mauritania, Iraq, and even Bulgaria.²

The operation's mission is to conduct naval operations in the Mediterranean in order to actively demonstrate NATO's resolve and solidarity. For the first time in NATO's history, Alliance assets have been deployed in support of Article 5 operations. The deployment was one of eight measures taken by NATO to support the United States in the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001, following the invocation of Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, expanding the options available in the campaign against terrorism. The deployment, which was formally named Operation Active Endeavour on October 26th, 2001 and is directed from Allied Naval Forces Southern Europe (NAVSOUTH) in Naples, Italy, represented a milestone for the Alliance.

NATO has contributed Airborne Warning and Control Systems aircraft (AWACS) to the United States and has also deployed elements of its Standing Naval Forces to the Eastern Mediterranean. AWACS provide air surveillance and early warning capability by transmitting data to command and control centres on land, sea or in the air. The naval assets of Standing Naval Force Mediterranean (STANAVFORMED), which participated in Exercise Destined Glory 2001 off the southern coast of Spain, were re-assigned in order to provide an immediate NATO military presence in the Eastern Mediterranean.³

Operation Active Endeavour is conducted by Vice Admiral Roberto Cesaretti, Italian Navy, Commander Allied Maritime Component Command Naples (CC-Mar Naples) from his headquarters in Naples, Italy, through a Task Force deployed to the Eastern Mediterranean, named Task Force Endeavour (TFE) and, since March 10th, 2003, a Task Force deployed to the Strait of Gibraltar (STROG).

Under Operation Active Endeavour, NATO ships are patrolling the Mediterranean, monitoring shipping and providing escorts to non-military vessels through the Straits of Gibraltar to help detect, deter and protect against terrorist activity.

The operation has evolved out of NATO's immediate response to the terrorist attacks against the United States of September 11th, 2001. As the Alliance has refined its counter-terrorism role in the intervening years, the operation's mandate has been regularly reviewed and its remit extended. The operation aims to demonstrate NATO's solidarity and resolve in the fight against terrorism and to help detect and deter terrorist activity in the Mediterranean.

Bezpiecze stwo w Unii Europejskiej, <http://europa.gery.pl/index.php?id=unia&ue=bezp/inne/procesbar>, July 13, 2008.

³ *Standing Naval Force Mediterranean*, [www.afsouth.nato.int/FACTSHEETS/STANAVFORMED](http://www.afsouth.nato.int/FACTSHEETS/STANAVFORMED.htm), htm, Dec. 12, 2007.

NATO forces have monitored more than 75,000 vessels, boarding some 100 suspect ships. In addition, over 480 ships have taken advantage of NATO escorts. The increased NATO presence in these waters has benefited all shipping travelling through the Straits by improving perceptions of security.⁴

The aims of the military mission are: keeping seas safe, protecting shipping, controlling suspect vessels, and closer cooperation with partners.

Keeping the Mediterranean's busy trade routes open and safe is critical to NATO's security. In terms of energy alone, some 65 per cent of the oil and natural gas consumed in Western Europe pass through the Mediterranean each year, with major pipelines connecting Libya to Italy and Morocco to Spain. For this reason, NATO ships are systematically carrying out preparatory route surveys in "choke" points as well as in important passages and harbours throughout the Mediterranean.⁵

Since April 2003, NATO has been systematically boarding suspect ships. These boardings take place with the compliance of the ships' masters and flag states in accordance with international law.

What happens in practice is that merchant ships passing through the Eastern Mediterranean are hailed by patrolling NATO naval units and asked to identify themselves and their activity. This information is then reported to both NATO's Naval Forces Southern Europe in Naples, Italy, and the NATO Shipping Centre in Northwood, England. If anything appears unusual or suspicious, teams of between 15 and 20 soldiers may board vessels to inspect documentation and cargo.

While the mandate of Active Endeavour is limited to deterring and detecting terrorist-related activities, the operation has had a visible effect on security and stability in the Mediterranean that is beneficial to trade and economic activity.

NATO ships and helicopters have also intervened on several occasions to rescue civilians on stricken oil rigs and sinking ships. This includes helping 84 workers to evacuate an oil rig in high winds and heavy seas in December 2001 and winching women and children off a sinking ship carrying some 250 refugees in January 2002 and helping to repair the damaged hull. On December 4th, 2001, STANAVFORMED ships ALISEO, FORMION and ELROD were called to assist in the rescue of 84 civilians from a stricken oil rig. In high winds and heavy seas, the Italian helicopter of the ALISEO removed all 84 workers from the oil rig in 14 flights. On January 2nd, 2002, SNFL's Spanish frigate SPS EXTREMADURA and Netherlands oiler HNMLS AMSTERDAM, the UK naval vessel HMS BEAGLE and the Greek Coast Guard provided life-saving support to the passengers of a sinking ship in the Eastern Mediterranean off Crete. The BEAGLE's crew repaired the leaking hull and damaged propulsion to the AYDIN KAPTAN before the weather deteriorated and Greek helicopters began winching the children and women amongst the 254 refugees onboard and carried them to Crete and the AMSTERDAM. On January 3rd, 2002, the AYDIN KAPTAN was towed by a Greek fishing vessel, under SNFL escort, to Greek territorial waters.⁶

⁴ *NATO Topics: Operation Active Endeavour*, www.nato.int/issues/active_endeavour/index.html, Dec. 9, 2007.

⁵ *Combating terrorism at sea*, www.nato.int/docu/briefing/terrorism_at_sea/terrorism_at_sea-e.pdf, Dec. 13, 2007.

⁶ *Operation Active Endeavour*, www.lists.indymedia.org/pipermail/imc-eastem-mediterranean/2006-October/1028-fm.html - 14k, Dec. 12, 2007.

Operation Active Endeavour provided the framework for the maritime component of NATO's assistance to the Greek government to ensure the safe conduct of the 2004 Olympic and Para Olympic Games in August and September 2004. Task Force Endeavour conducted surveillance, presence and compliant boarding operations in international waters around the Greek peninsula with Standing Naval Forces surface ships, supported by maritime patrol aircraft and submarines and in coordination with the Hellenic Navy and Coast Guard.⁷

The increased NATO presence in the Mediterranean has also enhanced the Alliance's security cooperation programme with seven countries in the wider Mediterranean region - Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia. This programme, the Mediterranean Dialogue, was set up in 1995 to contribute to regional security and stability and to achieve better mutual understanding between NATO and its Mediterranean Partners.⁸

Mediterranean Dialogue countries are equally concerned by the threat of terrorism and have already been cooperating with NATO in Active Endeavour by providing intelligence about suspicious shipping operating in their waters. Enhanced coordination and cooperation mechanisms are currently being developed (Zaj c 2002: 113-116).

Since October 2001, NATO ships have been patrolling the Mediterranean and monitoring shipping, boarding any suspect ships.

Moreover, in March 2003, Active Endeavour was expanded to include providing escorts through the Straits of Gibraltar to non-military ships from Alliance member states requesting them.

One year later, in March 2004, as a result of the success of Active Endeavour in the Eastern Mediterranean, NATO extended its remit to the whole of the Mediterranean. This extension of the mission was designed to help prevent terrorist attacks such as those off Yemen on the USS COLE in October 2000 and on the French oil tanker LIMBURG two years later. The area is considered particularly vulnerable because the Straits are extremely narrow and some 3,000 commercial shipments pass through every day.⁹

⁷ *NATO briefing: Response to terrorism*, www.cipp.gmu.edu/archive/44_NATO_Against_Terrorism.pdf

⁸ *Bezpiecze stwo w Unii Europejskiej*, <http://europa.gery.pl/index.php?id=unia&ue=bezp/inne/procesbar>, July 21, 2007.

⁹ Americans' reaction on the extension of Operation Active Endeavour has been described by Richard Boucher, in Washington DC, released in March 4, 2003:

"The United States welcomes the March 3 decision by the 19 NATO Allies to extend Operation Active Endeavour, which ensures safe passage of non-combatant vessels through the Strait of Gibraltar. The consensus to extend Operation Active Endeavour to the Western Mediterranean strengthens NATO's counterterrorism capability, and demonstrates NATO's firm commitment to meeting the threat of terrorism from wherever it may come. Yesterday's decision authorizes NATO's Standing Naval Forces to escort Allied non-combatant ships in transit through the Strait of Gibraltar and to detect and respond to any threats that arise.

Launched after the Allied invocation of Article 5 following the September 11 attacks on the United States, Operation Active Endeavour brought together NATO's air, surface, and sub-surface units to carry out patrolling, surveillance, and monitoring in the Eastern Mediterranean. The contributions of Active Endeavour to intelligence-gathering and security and safety

At the June 2004 Istanbul Summit, Allied leaders decided to enhance Operation Active Endeavour. Russia and Ukraine have also offered support and the modalities of their participation are being finalised.¹¹ Allied leaders welcomed offers by Russia and Ukraine to support the operation. In December 2005, NATO officials visited Sevastopol to discuss Ukrainian fleet preparations for participation in OAE. On January 27th, 2006, Ukrainian president Viktor Yushchenko signed a decree approving the Vilnius agreement, which will allow Ukrainian forces to participate in OAE.¹⁰

The NATO Standing Naval Force Mediterranean and Standing Naval Force Atlantic rotate on a three-monthly basis in Operation Active Endeavour. Some NATO nations, mainly Greece, Italy, Spain and Turkey, contribute directly to the operation with naval assets. Escort operations in the Straits of Gibraltar involve the use of fast patrol boats from Northern European Allies Denmark, Germany and Norway. Spain also provides additional assets in the Straits. Operation Active Endeavour relies heavily on the logistic support of Mediterranean NATO Allies. Last time, one of the new members of NATO, Bulgaria, joined the mission. Eight Bulgarian marines received NATO In Service of Peace and Freedom medals for their participation in the Active Endeavour operation. All are members of the crew of Druzki frigate. General Jurgen Bornemann awarded the soldiers in the Defence Ministry on March 27th, Focus news agency reported. The ceremony was an indication that although Bulgaria was a new NATO member, it contributed to the alliance's operations, Bornemann said. Bulgaria contributed to the fight against global terrorism, he said. Deputy Defence Minister Sonya Yankoulova said that the medals are the first that Bulgarian troops received for their participation in an international peacekeeping operation. "We all know that terrorism is a major threat, which worries and challenges the alliance," Yankoulova said.¹²

While conducting counter-terrorist operations in the Mediterranean Sea, ships assigned to Operation Active Endeavour have also assisted the Greek government with the prevention of illegal immigration. On March 23rd, 2006, NATO forces alerted the Hellenic Coast Guard of a vessel named "M/V Crystal." The coast guard units intercepted the ship and arrested the captain and crew who were attempting to smuggle 126 illegal immigrants.¹³ Vice Admiral Roberto Cesaretti went on to state: "Although this event relates to criminals, there is also a message for the terrorists here - we are looking for you, and when we find you - there will be no place to hide."

of non-combatant shipping have been significant over the past 16 months." News from the Washington File: *Text: U.S. Welcomes Expansion of NATO Naval Patrols in Mediterranean*, www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/news/2003/03/mil-030305-usia01.htm, Dec. 12, 2007.

¹⁰ Second Ukrainian ship supports Operation Active Endeavour, www.blackanthem.com/News/Allies_20/Second-Ukrainian-ship-supports-Operation-Active-Endeavour12068.shtml, Dec. 9, 2007.

¹¹ *Naval response to a changed security environment: maritime security in the Mediterranean*, www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0JIW/is_3_60/ai_n21053329/pg_20 - 27k, Dec. 12, 2007.

¹² www.sofiaecho.com/.../id_21511/catid_68 - 44k, Dec. 10, 2007.

¹³ Naval response to a changed security environment: maritime security in the Mediterranean, www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0JIW/is_3_60/ai_n21053329/pg_20 - 27k, Dec. 12, 2007.

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

- 06 Oct 2001 SNFM departs Exercise Destined Glory 2001 for the Eastern Mediterranean
- 26 Oct 2001 Operation Active Endeavour begins
- 04 Dec 2001 Rescue operation
- 04 Feb 2003 Escorting in the Strait of Gibraltar begins
- 29 Apr 2003 Compliant Boardings commenced
- 10 Dec 2003 Strait of Gibraltar escorting suspended
- 29 Jan 2004 Strait of Gibraltar escorting resumed
- 16 March 2004 Operation expanded to the whole Mediterranean
- 29 May 2004 Strait of Gibraltar escorting suspended
- 15 September 2006 NATO authorised the Russian Federation Ship Pitliviy to participate in Operation Active Endeavour
- 25 May 2007 Ukrainian Ship Ternopil joined OAE
- 06 June 2007 Israel and NATO signed a TMOU concerning exchange of information

The experience that NATO has accrued in Active Endeavour has given the Alliance unparalleled expertise in this field. This expertise is relevant to wider international efforts to combat terrorism and, in particular, the proliferation and smuggling of weapons of mass destruction.

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