



NATO  
OTAN

*Active  
Endeavour*



# briefing

DECEMBER 2003



NATO naval  
operations



Proliferation  
Security  
Initiative

## Combating terrorism at sea

“Keeping  
the Mediterranean’s  
busy trade routes open  
and safe is critical  
to NATO’s security”

**N**ATO ships have been patrolling in the Eastern Mediterranean monitoring shipping to detect and deter terrorist activity since October 2001 as part of the Alliance’s response to the terrorist attacks of 11 September of that year.

The operation, called *Active Endeavour*, has since been extended to include providing escorts to non-military shipping through the Straits of Gibraltar. Moreover, as *Active Endeavour* is generally perceived to have been a great success and the Alliance has refined its counter-

terrorism role in the years since its establishment, the operation’s mandate is currently being reviewed with a view to extending its remit.

NATO deployed its Standing Naval Forces to the Eastern Mediterranean on 6 October 2001 a day before the ►





Vice Admiral  
Sanfelice di Monteforte:  
“*Active Endeavour* is a  
fulfilment of a NATO  
commitment to the  
United States”



beginning of Operation *Enduring Freedom*, the US-led campaign to oust *al Qaida* and the Taliban from Afghanistan, in a demonstration of Alliance resolve and solidarity. This deployment was one of eight measures (see box on page 6) taken by NATO to support the United States in the wake of the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, following the invocation of Article 5, NATO's collective defence provision, for the first time in the Alliance's history.

The operation, which was formally named *Active Endeavour* on 26 October 2001 and is directed from Allied Naval Forces Southern Europe (NAVSOUTH) in Naples, Italy, represents a milestone for the Alliance. Together with the deployment of Airborne Warning and Control Systems (AWACS) aircraft to the United

States, it was the first time that NATO assets had been deployed in support of an Article 5 operation.

“*Active Endeavour* is a fulfilment of a NATO commitment to the United States following the terrorist attacks of September 2001,” says NAVSOUTH Commander, Italian Vice Admiral Ferdinando Sanfelice di Monteforte, who is also the commander of *Active Endeavour*. “It is also an important contribution to the preservation of peace, stability and security of all Alliance member nations.” As of November 2003, some 36,000 vessels had been monitored.

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, in addition to *Active Endeavour*, NATO ships systematically carry out preparatory route surveys in “choke” points as well as in important passages and harbours throughout the Mediterranean.



## Expanding the mission

In March 2003, NATO began an intelligence-driven operation providing escorts through the Straits of Gibraltar to non-military ships from Alliance member states requesting them. 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. In the words of Vice Admiral Sanfelice di Monteforte: "The Straits of Gibraltar is an extremely busy area. A terrorist boat is like a needle in a haystack."

Reactions to the offer of assistance have been positive and as of November 2003 some 350 ships had taken advantage of NATO escorts. Moreover, the increased NATO presence in these waters has benefited all shipping travelling through the Straits by improving perceptions of security.

In April 2003, NATO again expanded the mission and began 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 NAVSOUTH 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. This had happened on 33 occasions as of November 2003. The deterrent effect of these boardings is what is most significant.

The increased NATO presence in the Mediterranean also enhances the Alliance's security cooperation programme with seven countries in the wider Mediterranean region – Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia – which constitutes the Alliance's Mediterranean

Dialogue. This programme, which was set up in 1995, seeks to contribute to regional security and stability and to achieve better mutual understanding between NATO and its Mediterranean Partners.

Mediterranean Dialogue countries are equally concerned by the threat of terrorism and have been cooperating with NATO in *Active Endeavour* by providing intelligence about suspicious shipping operating in their waters. In the words of NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson: "Terrorism is a threat which knows no borders, and countering it requires the broadest possible international cooperation, including with our Mediterranean Partners."







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### Unexpected benefits

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.

The experience that NATO has accrued in *Active Endeavour* and other maritime interdiction operations (see box on page 5) 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. As a result, countries involved in the Proliferation Security Initiative (see box on page 6), a partnership of nations created at the initiative of the United States to help halt flows of dangerous technologies to and from states and non-state actors of concern, are currently seeking to learn the lessons of NATO's maritime interdiction operations. ►



Although many characteristics of *Active Endeavour* are essentially the same as those of earlier NATO maritime missions in terms of the equipment used and activities involved, the nature of the threat is new and has required the adoption of innovative approaches.

The operation has also accelerated the creation of a Maritime Interdiction Operations Training Centre to be established at Souda on Crete in Greece. This will be a centralised body to coordinate possible future embargoes, controls of trade and other operations like *Active Endeavour*.

The Alliance's two maritime high-readiness frigate forces – Standing Naval Forces Mediterranean and Standing Naval Forces Atlantic – rotate on a three-monthly basis in the Eastern Mediterranean in support of

*Active Endeavour*. These forces include ships from many NATO nations that are also deployed on a rotational basis. Additional forces are provided by Allies on a voluntary basis and *Active Endeavour* relies heavily on the logistic support of Allies in the Mediterranean. Spanish maritime forces play a particularly important role in escorting ships through the Straits of Gibraltar. ■

For more information on *Active Endeavour*, see <http://www.afsouth.nato.int/operations/Endeavour/Endeavour.htm>



## NATO *naval operations*

Since the end of the Cold War, NATO has acquired much experience and practical expertise in naval operations, whether carried out in support of individual Allies or coalitions of Allies or under the NATO banner. The longest-duration NATO maritime missions took place during the wars of Yugoslav dissolution. Between 1992 and 1996, the Alliance helped enforce both an arms embargo against the whole of the former Yugoslavia and economic sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro,

both of which were imposed by the UN Security Council. This operation, which also involved forces from the Western European Union, was originally called *Maritime Monitor* and then renamed *Sharp Guard* as the mission was expanded from surveillance to include boarding and searching of vessels. Given the many similarities with *Active Endeavour*, the experience gained during these years has proved extremely useful to the current operation. ■





The Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) is a response to the growing challenge posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), their delivery systems and related materials worldwide. Launched by US President George W. Bush in May 2003, it is a global partnership of countries seeking to halt the flow of dangerous technologies to and from states and non-state actors engaged in or supporting WMD proliferation programmes. NATO's experience of patrolling the Mediterranean to detect and deter terrorism in *Active Endeavour* is extremely relevant in this context. The PSI is not a NATO initiative, but many participating

## Proliferation Security Initiative

countries, including France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States, are Alliance members. Australia and Japan also participate and the initiative is open to any country wishing to cooperate in combating WMD proliferation in this way.

Participating countries agreed a *Statement of Interdiction Principles* in September. These commit them to undertaking effective measures, either alone or in concert with other states, in a number of specific areas: interdicting the transfer or transport of WMD, their delivery systems and related materials to and from states and non-state actors of proliferation concern; adopting streamlined procedures for rapid exchange of relevant information

concerning suspected proliferation activity; protecting the confidential character of classified information provided by other states as part of this initiative; dedicating appropriate resources and efforts to interdiction operations and capabilities and maximising coordination among participants in interdiction efforts; reviewing and working to strengthen relevant national legal authorities where necessary to accomplish these objectives and working to strengthen relevant international laws and frameworks in appropriate ways to support these commitments; and taking specific actions in support of interdiction efforts regarding cargoes of WMD, their delivery systems, or related materials, to the extent national legal authorities permit and consistent with their obligations under international law. ■

## Early measures to combat terrorism



Having invoked Article 5 in response to the terrorist attacks against the United States of 11 September 2001, the Allies agreed on 4 October 2001 – at the request of the United States – to take eight initial measures to implement it. Specifically, they agreed to enhance intelligence sharing and cooperation, both bilaterally and in the appropriate NATO bodies, related to the threats posed by terrorism and the actions to be taken against it; to provide individually or collectively, as appropriate and according

to their capabilities, assistance to Allies and other states which are or may be subject to increased terrorist threats as a result of their support for the campaign against terrorism; and to take necessary measures to provide increased security for facilities of the United States and other Allies on their territory.

The Allies also agreed to “backfill” selected Allied assets required to support operations against terrorism; to provide blanket overflight clearances for US and

other Allied aircraft for military flights related to operations against terrorism; and to provide access for the United States and other Allies to ports and airfields on the territory of NATO nations for operations against terrorism. In addition, the Allies agreed to deploy part of NATO's Standing Naval Forces to the Eastern Mediterranean and five AWACS planes to the United States to support operations against terrorism. ■

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