

# Operation UNIFIED PROTECTOR

## NATO-led Arms Embargo against Libya

October 2011



**Mission:** Since 23 March 2011, NATO warships and aircraft have been patrolling the approaches to Libyan territorial waters as part of Operation Unified Protector. Their mission is to prevent the flow of arms, related material and mercenaries to Libya.

**Mandate:** Operation Unified Protector is mandated under Chapter Seven of the UN Charter. UN Security Council Resolutions 1970, 1973 and 2009 relate to NATO's mission. UNSCRs 1970 and 1973 authorise the taking of "necessary measures" to prevent the flow of arms, related material and mercenaries to Libya.

**Command and Control:** The overall operation is commanded by Canadian Lieutenant General Charles Bouchard of Combined Joint Task Force Unified Protector. The Maritime Arms Embargo is under the command of Italian Vice Admiral Rinaldo Veri from NATO Maritime Command Naples. The Task Force Commander at sea is Italian Rear Admiral Filippo Maria Foffi.

**Participating Nation:** Twelve nations (Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, France, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Spain, Romania, Turkey, United Kingdom, and United States) have provided naval assets to enforce the embargo, supported by maritime patrol aircraft.

**Military Capabilities** involved in the mission include supply ships, frigates, destroyers, submarines, amphibious assault ships (also called landing platform docks) and aircraft carriers. At its peak, 21 naval assets were assigned to NATO in support of the operation. As at 29 September 2011, ten nations provide twelve naval assets to the embargo.

**Process:** Ships aiming to transit through the embargo area are required to notify NATO of their cargo and destination as detailed in a Navigation Warning message. Based on information provided by transiting vessels, including through the ships' Automated Identification System (which provides basic information about speed, position, course and destination), as well as surveillance and intelligence means, NATO verifies the activity of shipping in the region separating out legitimate commercial, humanitarian and private traffic from suspicious vessels that warrant closer inspection.

Suspicious vessels are hailed by radio, and if they cannot give satisfactory information about their cargoes, NATO ships are authorized to intercept them. As a last resort, NATO boarding teams are empowered to use force to gain access to the vessel to inspect the ship's log, crew list and cargo manifest. So far, all boardings have been unopposed. If weapons, mercenaries or related materials are found or if there are reasons to believe that the vessel or its cargo will be used to support attacks on civilians, either directly or indirectly, the vessel and its crew can be denied the right to continue to their destination.

As at 30 September 2011, a total of 2862 vessels have been hailed and 293 boarded. Eleven ships have been denied transit to or from Libyan ports because they represented a risk to the civilian population.

**Safety of Life at Sea:** All NATO maritime units are fully aware of their responsibilities with regard to the International Maritime Law regarding Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS). NATO ships will do everything they can to respond to distress calls and provide help when necessary, which they did on a number of occasions during the operation. In total, NATO ships have directly assisted in the rescue of more than 600 people in distress at sea. Through coordination with national authorities and coast guards, NATO has facilitated the rescue of many hundreds more.

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