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News stories

## A new Force Commander and a new flagship for SOPHIA



Last 14<sup>th</sup> December, onboard the Spanish ship Cantabria moored in Taranto Italian Naval base, the SOPHIA Task Force change of command ceremony was carried out and Spain has passed the duty of Force Commander to Italy.

On the occasion, the Spanish Navy Rear Admiral (Lower Half) Javier MORENO has given the duty to the new Deputy Force Commander, the Italian Navy Rear Admiral (Lower Half) Giuseppe Berutti Bergotto.

The Ceremony was hosted by EUNAVFOR MED Operation Commander, Rear Admiral (Upper Half) Enrico Credendino, at the presence of civil and military authorities.

*"I must highlight the excellent job that Cantabria has done. From this ship, the Force Commander has been able to provide tactical command of naval and air assets assigned to SOPHIA Task Force, as well coordinating those precious assets assigned in associated support",* underlined Admiral Credendino during the ceremony.

Italy took the lead of the operations at sea from the Italian ship Etna, the new flagship of the European Task Force, consequently the Italian frigate Zeffiro left the operation and the Spanish frigate Santa Maria joined the naval group.

Finally, Admiral Credendino addressed to Real Admiral (LH) Berutti Bergotto: *"Welcome back to EUNAVFOR MED, you, as Deputy Force Commander, will act as Force Commander in the upcoming days on behalf of Rear Admiral (LH) Alberto Maffeis, who will be back on board before the end of the year."*

EUNAVFOR Med operation Sophia launched last June 2015, is an EU military operation with the core task to contribute to wider EU efforts to disrupt the business model of human smuggling and trafficking networks in the Southern Central Mediterranean. Operation SOPHIA is part of the European Union comprehensive approach to the crisis in Libya.

From the beginning of operation, in which all the European countries are involved, EUNAVFOR MED has apprehended 130 suspected smugglers and delivered them to the Italian authorities, neutralized 520 boats from being re-used by smugglers and, in addition, rescued over 42.400 migrants.

From June 2016, when the European Council has also given the task of training the Libyan Coastguard, SOPHIA plays an important role in this activity too: 201 Libyans have been trained so far and the activity will continue in the next coming months.

## **Photo Galleries - A new Force Commander and a new flagship for SOPHIA**







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