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News stories

## **MARSUR put to the test during live demonstration at OHQ EUNAVFOR MED SOPHIA**



On May 10 2017 in Rome the OHQ EUNAVFOR MED Operation SOPHIA with the sponsorship of the European Defence Agency hosted the Maritime Surveillance Networking (MARSUR) Live Demonstration at the OHQ in Rome. MARSUR Networking was designed to enhance the Recognized Maritime Picture and to support CSDP Operations. Following its launch in 2006, MARSUR has grown to become EDA's longest running project, with 17 EU Member States plus Norway now forming the MARSUR Community. Today's capability demonstration was attended by 30 distinguished guests from 15 EU Member States and Norway plus representatives from the EUMC, EMSA and the EU SATCEN.

The forum was also addressed by EDA Deputy Chief Executive Mr. Rini GOOS and the EUNAVFOR MED operation SOPHIA Deputy Commander, Rear Admiral Luc-Marie LEFEBVRE.

The key enabler for maritime operations is having the maritime information needed to operate on dangerous seas. Within this challenging domain, decision-makers need to receive the information they need in a readily usable format, allowing to them incorporate different data and information from civilian and military actors. To respond to this need an innovate capability that allows actors to exchange operational data, which in turn enhances situation awareness, was created by EDA, MARSUR. Speaking before the launch of the live demonstration, EDA Deputy Chief Executive Mr. Rini Goos addressed the forum and highlighting how MARSUR represents a vital aspect of EDA's strong commitment to supporting the naval aspects of European defence. *"The link between Operation SOPHIA and MARSUR is the perfect example of constructive and targeted efforts to implement the EU Maritime Security Strategy, ensuring overarching information exchange among European actors in a cross-sectoral and comprehensive way. This interaction with multiple maritime security stakeholders and the backing it provides to EUMMS' vision, makes MARSUR and SOPHIA's endeavor an excellent implementation example of the goals and principles we have set for our Union in the maritime domain."*

For the first time, the event brought together the input provided by Member States via the respective Maritime Operations Center's (MOCs) and demonstrated how they can be used to create a comprehensive Maritime Situation Picture. At the live capability demonstration, EUNAVFOR MED Operation SOPHIA Deputy Operation Commander stressed the role and relevance of Operation SOPHIA and its dependance on maritime situational awareness. The success of Operation SOPHIA depends on a large extent on the cooperation of EU Member States which is true for the recognized maritime picture profiting from the input of the MARSUR Networking, as well.

In building the demonstration, a storyboard created for this event outlining the contribution of several MARSUR Participating Member States (PMS) over several months with information gathered in the MOCs by naval assets not assigned to Operation SOPHIA providing valuable input to the Operations situational awareness. The picture quickly filled up with relevant information in a short time. 6 MOCs corresponded to specific requests by relevant core services offered by the MARSUR capability: Live Chat, Email, Voice of IP and Track Streaming were specific services provided, and helped to add, analyse and deal with suspicious or otherwise relevant tracks in Operation SOPHIA. Even PMS without a completely developed MARSUR capability were able to contribute by helping to identify different Vessels of Common Interest (VCI) or providing amplifying information about their movement.

During today's live demonstration, a mobile component of the MARSUR capability was presented - a German Auxiliary Vessel assigned to Operation SOPHIA, the FGS RHEIN, demonstrated the use of the MARSUR capability as a maritime situational awareness tool installed on a potential Force Headquarter afloat.

With some further support and integration into national systems MARSUR could become a most valuable tool for any future CSDP Operation, making best use of naval units already deployed in an area of responsibility not part of the Operation. Pointing to this aspect, Mr. Rini Goos commented, *"I am certain that this standard of European concerted effort will be taken further because, as the demonstration will show, the use of the MARSUR capability could become a blueprint for any future CSDP Operation."*

The significance of the live demonstration at OHQ EUNAVFOR MED SOPHIA has also helped to advance the trust and close cooperation among Navy MOCs in Europe, uniting a common European cause pursued through Operation SOPHIA.

## **Background**

### **EUNAVFOR MED operation SOPHIA**

EUNAVFOR MED operation SOPHIA, launched in June 2015, presents its core task to contribute to wider EU efforts to disrupt the business model of human smuggling and trafficking networks in the Southern Central Mediterranean. To date, we have apprehended 109 suspected smugglers and traffickers and neutralized 426 boats, preventing them from being re-used by smugglers. Additionally, from October 2016, we are fully involved in the training of the Libyan Navy and Libyan Navy Coast Guard and in the implementation of the arms embargo off the coast of Libya according to UNSCR 2292(2016).

### **European Defence Agency**

The European Defence Agency was established under a Joint Action of the Council of Ministers on 12 July, 2004, "to support the Member States and the Council in their effort to improve European defence capabilities in the field of crisis management and to sustain the European Security and Defence Policy as it stands now and develops in the future". It is an Agency of the EU.

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