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Press releases

EUNAVFORMED operation SOPHIA seizes weapons on board a vessel in International waters

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On Monday, 1 May 2017, Operation Sophia seized weapons in international waters in the Mediterranean. The German ship Rhein carried out an inspection on the motor vessel EL MUKTHAR, flying a Libyan flag, in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 2292 (2016).

The Lithuanian boarding team reached the vessel by zodiacs and once on board, the team found several types of weapons, including Machine Guns, AK47 rifles, RPG bullets, RPG launchers, mortar grenades and ammunitions.

All weapons were seized and then transferred on board the German ship to be checked, counted and then disposed of by military personnel, in accordance with paragraph 3 of the UNSCR 2292.

Any evidence directly related to the carriage of items prohibited under the arms embargo on Libya will be transmitted to the relevant law enforcement authorities of Member States and/or to competent European Union bodies and a report on the matter will be submitted to the UN Sanctions Committee.

EUNAVFOR MED operation SOPHIA was launched on 22 June 2015 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.

Additionally, from October 2016 EUNAVFOR Med Operation Sophia has been carrying out two additional tasks: the training of the Libyan Navy and Libyan Navy Coast Guard and the implementation of the arms embargo off the coast of Libya according to UNSCR 2292 (2016).

UN Security Council Resolution 2292 (2016) condemns the flows of arms to or from Libya and authorises Member States acting nationally or through regional organisations to conduct inspections and seize and divert vessel suspected of transferring arms to or from Libya.

Following EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia's activities, 109-suspected smugglers and traffickers

have been apprehended and 422 boats have been removed from criminal organisations' availability. As contribution to the enforcement of the UN arms embargo, the operation carried out 530 events in accordance with UNSCR 2292 (2016) and among them, 45 friendly approaches, 7 flag enquiries and two inspections.

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