



Information bulletin EMASoH October - November 2021

Activities

October and November saw a significant contribution from Italy with the Horizon class frigate MARTINENGO and the support of an UAV MQ-9 REAPER. This new contribution to AGENOR Task Force 474, was exposed in the FHQ to His Excellency Nicola Lener, the Italian ambassador to the UAE.

Upon her departure from the operation, ITS MARTINENGO had performed a dozen of transits in the Strait of Hormuz, reassuring the shipping and monitoring in the area.

On her journey back home from Asia, the Dutch frigate HNLMS EVERTSEN shared information with AGENOR and made a port visit in Muscat with MARTINENGO. These visits gave EMASoH' Senior Civilian Representative, Ambassador Jakob Brix Tange, who was visiting the region with the Force Commander Captain de Véricourt, an opportunity to engage Omani authorities, promote EMASoH/AGENOR and share views on how to improve dialogue on maritime security.



On 15 November 2021 a maritime patrol aircraft ATL2 joined AGENOR. Specifically designed for maritime surveillance, this aircraft dramatically improves our coverage and analysis of the region.



Last summer, Norway decided to join EMASoH and support the FHQ. With the arrival of two officers on 17 November, the FHQ is manned by six EMASoH partner nations. This additional support has made possible to reinforce the FHQ's shipping desk to improve contact with shipping stakeholders.



Visits

Fruitful meetings took place lately, whether in the FHQ itself, in Oman or in Europe. They brought valuable opportunities to share operation AGENOR's experience and to exchange views between partner forces operating in the North-Western Indian Ocean (NWIO):

- Ambassador Brix Tange brought a visit to OHQ and FHQ to understand the military track of EMASoH and discuss perspectives for the mission beyond 2021. The FHQ presented him naval activity in AGENOR area of responsibility, contacts with the merchant shipping, reassurance and accompaniments of their vessels.
- Captain de Véricourt attended the 11th annual Strategic Security Meeting in London in support of EU NAVFOR/ATALANTA. The meeting was to share views on the security in the NWIO between shipping stakeholders and military organization. It proved invaluable for our mutual understanding. This journey to Europe was an opportunity to visit the European Community Shipowners Association (ECSA) in Brussels. His meeting with Mrs Luisa Puccio, Director Shipping and Trade Policy helped identify options to improve EMASoH visibility amongst EMASoH partners Ship-owners associations.
- AGENOR FHQ received the visit of Captain Brendon Clark (CTF150), and INS TRIKAND's commanding officer. Briefings helped understand ways to improve exchange between our respective missions in the Arabian Sea.

Situation and assessment

Although the area remains subject to probable maritime incidents, we can reasonably assume that EMASoH partners' shipping should not worry for its safety in the region. October and November have been quiet months on the maritime domain. The annual Iranian exercise Zulfikar held beginning of November in the gulf of Oman was advertised and observed by AGENOR and others. Overall, no significant tension arose enough to make vessel masters worried about their security.

With negotiations on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) due to resume on 29th November, it was noticeable that contenders of the regional nuclear debate tried to take advantage of every maritime event to convey strategic messages on the sanctions in force.

On the other hand, patrols in the area confirm a recurrent tendency to play with AIS rules. A number of vessels turn their AIS transponder. Some of them even set their AIS on a course different from their actual journey.

We regularly observe ships hiding their identity as a complement to AIS spoofing. Studies reveal that these behaviours have various rationales. Some companies' require their masters to cruise with their AIS silent to escape coastal surveillance.

Some vessels obviously warp their AIS diary to hide their real journey and escape international controls. Some simply do not care shining AIS or even maintaining their device operational. It remains critical for EMASoH shipping to comply with AIS rules, as a proof of goodwill and for the benefit of maritime safety.

EMASoH mission is to enhance safety of navigation for our merchant fleet. Our task is to observe and analyse naval and merchant activities. To be effective in reaching that goal a clear image of civilian shipping is paramount, a task for which our NCAGS cell is responsible (Naval Cooperation And Guidance for Shipping), with the support of the FHQ battle watch. Regular reports from EMASoH shipping to AGENOR FHQ and proper AIS behaviour help NCAGS to elaborate an accurate maritime picture and issue relevant analysis of events.

EMASOH flagged ships in the area

On any given day there are around 80 ships sailing under EMASoH flag. If we extend our view to the beneficial owners, this increases to about 380. When we compare EMASOH flagged vessels to Beneficial Owners, we see that the repartition ratio remains mostly the same. Below chart (Fig.1) provides an overview of the repartition of ships per flag state.

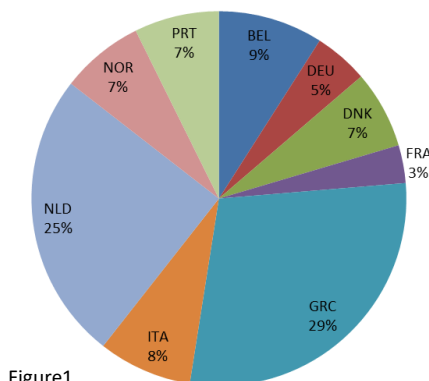


Figure1