

# **OPERATION ATALANTA AT THE HORN OF AFRICA – THE GERMAN CONTRIBUTION TO THE FIRST MARITIME OPERATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The international community has shown that it can provide maximum protection from pirate attacks, with a coordinated use of available units, i.e. ships and aircraft, for monitoring the Gulf of Aden and the Somali Basin.

The German Navy has participated in Operation ATALANTA since December 2008, so this article will evaluate the German involvement in respect to

- the legal basis, quoting the respective UN Security Council Resolutions,
- the tasks of Operation ATALANTA, i.e. protection of vessels of the World Food Programme and prevention and suppression of acts of piracy,
- the organisational structure of ATALANTA,
- the overall composition of the EU Naval Force, provided by ten EU Member States and Norway.

ATALANTA is not the only operation in the region Horn of Africa / Gulf of Aden, so one chapter is dedicated to further operations: ENDURING FREEDOM, ALLIED PROVIDER / ALLIED PROTECTOR / OCEAN SHIELD, “Combined / Coalition Maritime Forces” and individual missions from countries sending out ships and / or aircraft for the protection of national interests and / or the protection of national merchant ships.

It is not only the Navy engaged in the region, but there is further German engagement, with EUCAP NESTOR and European Union Training Mission (EUTM) Somalia.

There are always challenges and room for improvement, so the efforts of the international community have and must continue to contribute to the stabilization of Somalia.

The number of attacks, and in particular the successful hijackings, have declined since December 2008 and are almost down to zero by now. Despite all the success it must be first priority for the international community to improve conditions in Somalia. The shifting of piracy activities from the Horn of Africa to the Gulf of Guinea is discussed in the outlook.

The international community has shown that it can provide maximum protection from pirate attacks, with a coordinated use of available units, i.e. ships and aircraft, for monitoring the Gulf of Aden and the Somali Basin. Obviously, with more ships and more aircraft an even greater coverage can be achieved. In the past almost six years, the external conditions, the threats and the rules of engagement for the units involved have gradually changed.



**Fig. 1.** Somalia, Djibouti, Uganda and the Horn of Africa

*Source: Google maps.*

Germany has participated in Operation ATALANTA from the beginning (December 2008) to the present (October 2014), so it may be allowed to evaluate the German involvement. In addition to the legal basis and to the mission of the Operation ATALANTA, the units of the German Navy participating in this operation will be presented, as well as a look at other missions in the area. For this purpose, the starting point is selected for December 2008, the time line will end in September 2014 with an outlook into 2015, scaling the four- to six-month-deployments in table 1a/b. Some examples will be used to illustrate the overall positive development of this operation.

## 1. LEGAL BASIS FOR EU OPERATION ATALANTA

The mission of the EU Operation ATALANTA is derived from the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council (UNSCR). The first resolution of 2008, in which the Security Council deals with Somalia, is UNSCR 1801. However, the first resolutions primarily look at African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). In several the following UNSCRs in 2008 dealing with the situation in Somalia, the Security Council, acting

“under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations (...)

- Reiterates its support for the contribution made by some States to protect the World Food Programme maritime convoys, calls upon States and regional Organizations (...) to take action to protect shipping involved with the transportation and delivery of humanitarian aid to Somalia and United Nations-authorized activities” (UNSCR 1814),
- “Condemns and deplores all acts of piracy and armed robbery against vessels in territorial waters and the high seas off the coast of Somalia” (UNSCR 1816, 1838, 1846),
- is “Expressing again its determination to ensure the long-term security of World Food Programme (WFP) maritime deliveries to Somalia” (UNSCR 1846),
- is “Determining that the situation in Somalia continues to constitute a threat to international peace and security in the region” (UNSCR 1853)<sup>1</sup>.

While AMISOM and United Nations Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS) find frequent mention in UNSCR 1814, there is only one subordinate clause (para 11), which holds a first reference to the protection of vessels of the World Food Programme (WFP). UNSCR 1816, however, has focused almost exclusively on piracy and armed robbery cases on the general maritime traffic in and outside the territorial waters of Somalia. The international community vehemently

- “Urges States whose naval vessels and military aircraft operate on the high seas and airspace off the coast of Somalia to be vigilant to acts of piracy and armed robbery and, in this context, encourages, in particular, States interested in the use of commercial maritime routes off the coast of Somalia, to increase and coordinate their efforts to deter acts of piracy and armed robbery at sea in cooperation with the [Transitional Federal Government of Somalia] TFG”,
- “Calls upon States and interested organizations, including the IMO, to provide technical assistance to Somalia and nearby coastal States upon their request to enhance the capacity of these States to ensure coastal and maritime security, including combating piracy and armed robbery off the Somali and nearby coastlines”,

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<sup>1</sup> All quotations from United Nations website.

- and allows to “Enter the territorial waters of Somalia for the purpose of repressing acts of piracy and armed robbery at sea”<sup>2</sup>.

In this resolution 1816, the

“crisis situation in Somalia, and the lack of capacity of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) to interdict pirates or patrol and secure either the international sea lanes off the coast of Somalia or Somalia’s territorial waters,”

was explicitly pointed out - Somalia has no functioning armed forces since 1991, and de facto no more naval units, which would enable the TFG to oppose piracy. This non-existent ability is – amongst others – seen as a non-existent prerequisite to establish peace and stability in Somalia.

In support of the above resolutions of the United Nations, the European Union adopted a Joint Action 2008/749/CFSP on September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2008, in which a coordinated military action to protect the vessels of the WFP is decided. Piracy itself is, however - except with reference to the UNSCR 1816 – only mentioned in the opening paragraph (1) – with reference to the UNSCR 1816 – and in paragraph (2):

- “In its conclusions of 26 May 2008 the Council expressed its concern at the upsurge of piracy attacks off the Somali coast”.

On the basis of the above mentioned resolutions, the European Union Naval Force (EUNAVFOR) ATALANTA was composed in December 2008 as the first maritime operation of the European Union, with varying contributions of the member states and some non-members during the past five and a half years.

During winter 2008/2009, the necessary deployment agreements (e.g. Status of Forces Agreement, SOFA) with Djibouti as a Forward Operating Base (FOB) were signed. After the legal framework had been established, the first German ship, the frigate KARLSRUHE (ATALANTA mission from December 2008 to February 2009) and the first German maritime patrol aircraft of type P3-C “Orion” (on March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2009) were deployed to Djibouti, which enabled the crews with short transit times to the Gulf of Aden (GOA) and the Somali Basin.

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2010, the defense ministers of the European Union had decided to extend the contract to include

- the control of Somali ports and
- the “neutralizing of pirate mother ships”,

starting March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2010.

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<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

Even in the latest addition to Joint Action 2008/749/CFSP, issued on March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2012 as Joint Action 2012/174/CFSP, operation ATALANTA is still primarily a protection mission for WFP ships and only in third priority an anti-piracy operation:

“The European Union (EU) shall conduct a military operation (...) in order to contribute to:

- the protection of vessels of the WFP delivering food aid to displaced persons in Somalia, in accordance with the mandate laid down in UNSC Resolution 1814 (2008), and
- the protection of vulnerable vessels cruising off the Somali coast, and the deterrence, prevention and repression of acts of piracy and armed robbery off the Somali coast, in accordance with the mandate laid down in UNSC Resolutions 1846 (2008) and 1851 (2008)” (Joint Action 2012/174/CFSP).

The termination date is laid down for December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2014, at this point in time (October 2014) it is not yet known whether the operation will be continued, modified or terminated in total.

Finally, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) applies to all maritime nations; in Article 98 the global international agreement of rendering assistance at sea is defined.

In the legal basis the financing of the operation – partly nationally, partly EU funded – is laid down. The distribution of financial efforts – like in other EU operations – underlies the principle of “costs lie where they fall”, meaning that the costs associated with national aspects shall be paid nationally, common costs shall be covered by the EU by means of the so-called Athena mechanism.

## **2. TASK OF EU OPERATION ATALANTA**

In the beginning, the main task of the operation was to protect vessels of the World Food Programme (WFP) of the United Nations (UN), as a second priority followed by the protection of vulnerable vessels off the Somali coast, and only as a tertiary order the prevention and suppression of acts of piracy. The Federal Ministry of Defense has formulated this more in detail:

- “Providing protection to the ships of the World Food Programme, among others by the presence of armed forces on board such vessels;
- In individual cases and protection of civilian shipping in the operating area, if need be;

- Monitoring the areas off the coast of Somalia, which might involve dangers to maritime activities;
- Deterrence, prevention and ending acts of piracy or armed robbery, allowing the use of force;
- Arresting, detention and transferring of persons having committed acts of piracy or armed robbery, as well as confiscating (suspected) pirate ships, equipment and hauled goods;
- Connect to (...) organizations and institutions and to (...) states" in the area as well as to active participants of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF, Combined Task Force 150)"<sup>3</sup>.

So undoubtedly ATALANTA was an anti-piracy mission only in subordinate priority, however, this has been amended to clarify that the German Navy uses the term anti-piracy mission or "mission to combat piracy", as well as the German Bundestag and the Foreign Office.

### **3. ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF ATALANTA AND THE GERMAN PARTICIPATION**

The leadership of Operation ATALANTA is, like all military operations, hierarchically structured. The Strategic Headquarters (Operations Headquarters, OHQ) of Operation ATALANTA is located in Northwood, near London, the Operational Headquarters (Force Headquarters, FHQ) is situated on the respective flagship in the area. For the Operation ATALANTA, first Operations Commander was Rear Admiral Philip Jones (Great Britain) until June 2009, followed by another British flag officer, Rear Admiral Peter Hudson. The Deputy Operations Commanders were nominated by the participating nations and appointed at shorter intervals. The German Navy also appointed senior military personnel in the headquarters and in the mission at the Horn of Africa. E.g. from June to December 2009, German Rear Admiral Thorsten Kähler was Deputy Operations Commander, his predecessor was the French Rear Admiral Jean-Pierre Labonne, his successor was the Spanish Rear Admiral Bartolomé Bauza. This example shows the multi-national approach of the EU Operation ATALANTA.

From mid-August to mid-December 2011, German Navy's Rear Admiral Thomas Jugel was appointed as the first German Force Commander. After four months, he handed over command of the units in the area, drawing a positive conclusion.

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<sup>3</sup> Taken from German Armed Forces website and translated by author.

The forces

“managed to reduce piracy. Despite an ever-increasing number of pirate attacks, their success rate in the theatre of operations during this season was as low as seldom before. The German contribution, which consisted not only of German command and frigate BAYERN as the flagship, but also of frigate KOELN and the ORION aircraft, was certainly of key importance for the success”<sup>4</sup>.

The Force Commander of Operation ATALANTA is generally embarked on his flagship, hence he can take advantage of the geographical proximity to his subordinate units, and important decisions can be made without delay. The Force Commander’s position will be newly appointed about every four months.

Another German flag officer at the head of the operation is Rear Admiral Thomas Ernst, who on July 04<sup>th</sup>, 2010 took over the responsibility as Deputy Operations Commander under Major General Buster Howes, OBE. Three years later, in July 2013, Admiral Ernst succeeded the French Rear Admiral Jacques de Solms as Operations Commander. With taking this position, Admiral Ernst at the same time assumed Command of the maritime aviation component of the NATO (COMMARAIR), with an area of responsibility from the North Atlantic Ocean and the Norwegian Sea through the Baltic Sea down to the Black Sea and the Mediterranean.

Furthermore several naval officers and non-commissioned officers of the German Navy serve in the headquarters in Northwood, as well as a German political advisor on the situation in Somalia, whose term of duty started on January 01<sup>st</sup>, 2014. As with most European Union operations, member states are requested, and non-member states (e.g. Norway, Turkey, Ukraine) are invited to delegate personnel and units to an operation.

The personnel of the OHQ in Northwood comprises of a total of up to 100 soldiers and civilians. The commander and his deputy lead the operation and, if necessary, have a direct line to the relevant committees of the European Union in Brussels.

#### **4. OVERALL COMPOSITION OF THE EU NAVAL FORCE**

A total of ten EU Member States and Norway have pledged to support the Operation ATALANTA with vessels and aircraft, which at any time consists of four to seven ships and two to three long-range maritime patrol aircraft (LRMPA) in the area of operations. The frigates are equipped with one or two helicopters as an extended sensor support, so that contacts far beyond the radar horizon can be localized, identified and, if necessary, controlled by a sea-going unit nearby.

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<sup>4</sup> Quoted from EU NAVFOR website.

As an example, the actual participating units (mid-2014),

- the German frigate “BRANDENBURG” as a flagship,
- the Dutch frigate “DE ZEVEN PROVINCIEËN”, and
- the Spanish frigate “RELÁMPAGO”, assisted by
- the German replenishment tanker “RHÖN”,

form the Task Force 465, i.e. Operation ATALANTA.

An interesting aspect involves the chartering of a civilian aircraft of type Swearingen Merlin III by CAE Aviation, which is involved on behalf of the Luxembourg Armed Forces. This small aircraft is stationed on the Seychelles and operates in a time-sharing concept between Luxembourg Armed Forces and the Seychelles Coast Guard. It is equipped with radar and electro-optical devices to conduct maritime patrol flights in the Somali Basin. The current composition of the units afloat and of the aviation detachments can be accessed anytime on the EU Naval Force website.

## 5. GERMAN PARTICIPATION

The following tables show the commitment of the German Navy since the beginning of the operation almost six years ago, with frigates, fleet supply ships, tankers and aircraft of the type P3-C “Orion” and the on-board helicopter Mk 88-A “Sea Lynx”.

**Table 1a.** Units afloat of the German Navy in Operation ATALANTA 2008–2011  
(own data collection)

Unit	Beginning of deployment	End of deployment	Remarks
KARLSRUHE	December 2008	February 2009	
MECKLENBURG-VORPOMMERN	November 2008	May 2009	accompanied by fleet supply ship „BERLIN“ (April – July 2009) and tanker „SPES-SART“ (April – May 2009); hence up to five German ships on deployment
RHEINLAND-PFALZ	March 2009	July 2009	
EMDEN	April 2009	July 2009	
BRANDENBURG	June 2009	September 2009	
KARLSRUHE	September 2009	November 2009	
BREMEN	September 2009	February 2010	
EMDEN	January 2010	May 2010	
SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN	May 2010	September 2010	accompanied by tanker „RHÖN“ (August – December 2010)
KÖLN	September 2010	December 2010	
HAMBURG	December 2010	March 2011	
NIEDERSACHSEN	March 2011	August 2011	
BAYERN	August 2011	December 2011	flagship



**Table 1b.** Units afloat of the German Navy in Operation ATALANTA 2011–2015  
(own data collection)

Unit	Beginning of deployment	End of deployment	Remarks
KÖLN	September 2011	November 2011	
LÜBECK	December 2011	March 2012	accompanied by fleet supply ship „BERLIN“ (February – May 2012)
BREMEN	May 2012	September 2012	
SACHSEN	August 2012	November 2012	
KARLSRUHE	November 2012	April 2013	
AUGSBURG	April 2013	August 2013	
NIEDERSACHSEN	August 2013	December 2013	
HESSSEN	December 2013	April 2014	
BRANDENBURG	April 2014	August 2014	accompanied by tanker „RHÖN“ (April – May 2014) and fleet supply ship „BERLIN“ (May – October 2014)
LÜBECK	September 2014	February 2015	
planned: BAYERN	February 2015	June 2015	

The land-based flying component of the Navy, the long range maritime patrol and reconnaissance aircraft (LR-MPRA) P3-C “Orion”, is integrated from the very beginning of Operation ATALANTA with three- to four-month deployments to Djibouti.

Helicopters type Mk 88-A “Sea Lynx” are permanently stationed on board of the frigates in the operation. The Sea Lynx is extremely versatile and can be used both as a transporter in medical emergencies as well as the frigate’s extended sensor. With its high-resolution cameras and infrared devices, it provides an indispensable contribution off the Somali coast.

Both aircraft and helicopters are home-based in Naval Air Wing 3 “Graf Zeppelin” in Nordholz, Germany, in Northwestern Lower Saxony. The sensor equipment of ships, aircraft and helicopters can be looked at on the appropriate websites of the German Armed Forces.

## 6. EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSES OF THE GERMAN PARTICIPATION

One example beyond the few published in the media (e.g. MV Taipan, April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2010) of the success of Operation ATALANTA as a whole and of German ships is an incident dated November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2013, when the frigate “NIEDERSACHSEN”

prevented a successful attack ride of a Pirate Action Group (PAG) off the Somali coast.

It should be allowed to quote this experience report here almost full-length, as in a short and concise form an anti-piracy mission is described (translation by author):

“The frigate “NIEDERSACHSEN” was on patrol off the Somali coast near a suspected pirate camp. Parallel to this patrol, the helicopter Sea Lynx was airborne for reconnaissance and spotted a suspicious boat. It was a so-called “whaler” (small boat) towing a skiff behind it. It was evident that no fishing gear was on board, but ladders and several drums were carried. Since the evidence of piracy hardened, the frigate approached the coastline up to one nautical mile and prepared for boarding. The German boarding team in their rigid-hulled inflatable boat (RHIB) approached the suspicious small boat with the suspected pirates on board. The vehicle should be stopped and checked. During the approach, the suspects threw several ladders overboard. Additionally, some of them jumped overboard and swam ashore in order to avoid being captured.”



**Fig. 2.** Detected pirates throwing ladders overboard

*Source: EU Naval Force – Somalia.*

Later it was determined that the frigate “NIEDERSACHSEN” had successfully prevented a planned attack ride of this Pirate Action Group.

Another example of the international cooperation in the Northwestern Indian Ocean was a German-Indian cooperation, handling a medical emergency in the summer of 2012. Here as well it may be permitted to quote this experience report excerpts verbatim (translation by author):

“On board the [German] frigate “BREMEN” [in] August 2012 one of the crew members [experienced a] (...)

medical emergency. The ship was at this point approximately 450 nautical miles off the coast of India.”

This would mean at least 15 hours transit time for the ship at maximum speed. “Also for a helicopter transfer (...) the distance was too long.” Hence, parallel to medical care for the patient by the on-board Medical Specialist Group, the German Defence Attaché in India evaluated the options to give the patients in specialist care as soon as possible. It was arranged that a “Sea King” helicopter from the Indian aircraft carrier “VIRAAT” picked up the soldier from the German frigate to transfer him to the Indian Navy Hospital in Mumbai.

## 7. FURTHER OPERATIONS IN THE AREA HORN OF AFRICA

In addition to the usually four to seven sea-based units and two to three land-based aircraft, which are used in ATALANTA, there are other military units located in other operations in the waters off Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden, with partly similar and partly completely different tasks.

First to be mentioned is the Operation ENDURING FREEDOM (Task Force 150). This operation was established on the basis of UNSCR 1368 and 1373 in September 2001 to fight against terrorism with a coordinated effort of the forces of the international community. Here, ships from many NATO countries are permanently integrated, and – if available – these are supplemented e.g. by Australian, New Zealand or Pakistani units. The German government in Berlin has first adopted a mandate for this operation on November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2001 and thereafter at intervals of twelve months, so that ships and aircraft of the German navy have consistently participated in this operation since February 2002.

Another set of consecutive operations in the area Gulf of Aden and Somali Basin is listed here:

- ALLIED PROVIDER (October 2008 to March 2009, the first anti-piracy mission in NATO’s history),
- ALLIED PROTECTOR (March-August 2009) and
- OCEAN SHIELD (since August 2009).

These missions – besides combatting piracy – also include capability building in countries of the region, an element of the operation, which is to support and complement the efforts of activities of international organizations and troops. For example, introductions, briefings and collaborations with various Northeast African coast guards are performed.

The United States of America composed the so called “Combined Maritime Forces” (Task Force 151, sometimes also called “Coalition Maritime Forces”) on January 08<sup>th</sup>, 2009. This also denominates an anti-piracy mission, with more than

twenty temporarily participating nations. Task Force 151 (or CMF) is able to relieve the larger Operation ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF) from the anti-piracy tasks so that they can focus on their original mission.

In addition, the United States of America and other countries such as Malaysia, South Korea, Singapore, Japan, Russia, India and China often send individual ships and/or aircraft for the protection of national interests and/or the protection of national merchant ships.

## 8. FURTHER GERMAN ENGAGEMENT IN THE REGION

In addition to Operation ATALANTA, the European Union has opted for a so-called “joined approach” of three missions in Somalia, which should complement each other. In addition to the mission ATALANTA the missions EUCAP NESTOR and EUTM Somalia (in Uganda) were established.

EUCAP NESTOR (Council Decision 2012/389/CFSP) stands for European Union Mission on Regional Maritime Capacity Building in the Horn of Africa; the members of the mission are

“working from their headquarters [Djibouti] for the improvement of governmental infrastructure of countries around the Horn of Africa. The focus is on the maritime competences and the constitutional structures. So the aim is to achieve, for example, that the East African navies and coast protection organizations (coast guards) can act against pirates more effectively. EUCAP NESTOR is virtually the civilian equivalent to Operation ATALANTA”<sup>5</sup>.

EUCAP NESTOR was commissioned on July 16th, 2012, for a period of 24 months, i.e. it is due for prolongation at this point in time.

The European Union Training Mission (EUTM) Somalia started in April 2010. Since then,

“EUTM Somalia has contributed to the training of approximately 3,600 Somali soldiers with a focus on the training of Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs), Junior Officers, specialists and trainers. Training was provided in Uganda due to the political and security situation in Somalia, in close collaboration with the Uganda People’s Defence Forces (UPDF). The training of the Somali National Armed Forces is focused on commander up to

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<sup>5</sup> Taken from German Armed Forces website and translated by author.

battalion and company level, in addition to specialist training in the areas of military police, civilian-military cooperation, intelligence, company commander and combat engineering. Modules on international humanitarian law and human rights, and the protection of civilians are also delivered”<sup>6</sup>.

EUTM Somalia’s Headquarters are located in Djibouti, with several country offices in the area. In Somalia itself, in

“Mogadishu, a team of EUTM Somalia advisors is providing strategic advice to the Somali authorities within the security institutions (Ministry of Defence and General Staff). Specific mentoring, advice and capacity building in the training domain and support and advice on security sector development issues”<sup>7</sup>

are the aims for the near future.

## 9. CHALLENGES AND NEED FOR IMPROVEMENT

Undoubtedly, the situation in Somalia, with the more or less separate entities of Somaliland, Puntland and central and southern Somalia and a non-existent governmental system, is to a large extent responsible for the increase of piracy over the last years. Thus, the efforts of the international community have and must continue to contribute to the stabilization of the country, in capitals, cities and villages, as well as on open ground. Nevertheless, a considerable contribution to this situation can also be made to and from the open ocean, from the waters around the Horn of Africa. These include the above-mentioned measures to build trust with various Northeast African coast guards, as well as – also already mentioned above – training of Somali security forces in EUTM Somalia for the last four years in Uganda.

## 10. STATISTICS

The number of attacks, and in particular the successful hijackings, have declined since December 2008.

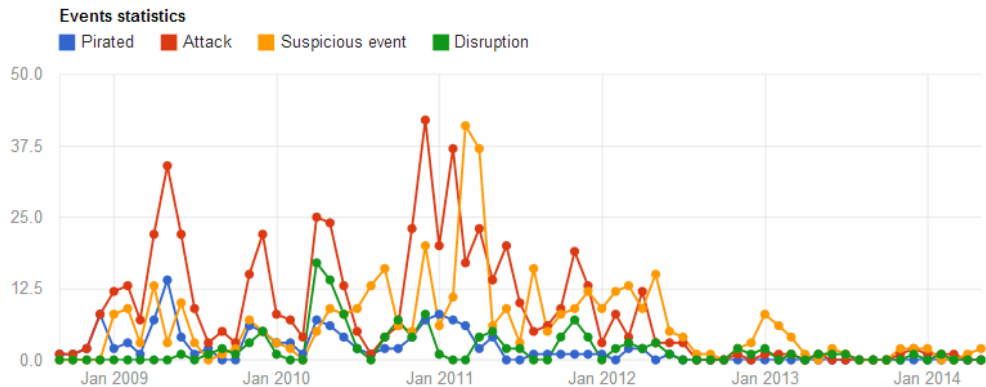
Before the start of Operation ATALANTA, the success for pirate attacks could be rated at 1:3 (one out of three attacks was successful), after the first year of

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<sup>6</sup> quoted from European Union Training Mission (EUTM) Somalia website.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*

ATALANTA this rate dropped to about 1:8.5 (two out of seventeen attacks were successful), always underlying the seasonal fluctuations with peaks outside the monsoon season. Since the end of 2012, the number of successful attacks is down to almost zero.



**Fig. 3.** Piracy Activity (reported) at the Horn of Africa Dec. 2008 – March 2014

Source: *EU Naval Force – Somalia*.

It is however not just one single measure, which is the cause for the reduction of the (unsuccessful and especially successful) pirate attacks. About half of unsuccessful attacks is a consequence of the fact that the merchant ships have adhered to the “Best Management Practices” (BMP), a package of measures, issued by the UK Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) office in Dubai, which acts as the primary point of contact for merchant vessels and liaison with military forces in the region. In this booklet, various recommendations for different situations are given, and adherence to an appropriate package of these recommendations results in rejecting the pirate attacks. “Best Management Practices” is now available in its fourth edition (BMP4).

Statistics show that since the beginning of Operation ATALANTA in December 2008, more than 270 ships of the World Food Programme with more than 900,000 tons of food were escorted to Somalia. Not a single ship of the World Food Programme could be hijacked by pirates<sup>8</sup>.

## 11. CONCLUSION

Operation ATALANTA is a military operation with a clear political intention. Although it can only treat the symptoms of the lack of state authority in Somalia with military and confidence-building measures, the development from 2008 to

<sup>8</sup> See EU NAVFOR website.

today has shown that ATALANTA can be considered a success and the German involvement in the Horn of Africa has had a positive effect.

First, this applies to the main task, securing the transportation of WFP. The successful statistics, e.g. for the year 2009, was presented by Rear Admiral Peter Hudson in British Parliament on January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2010: 49 ships of the WFP and 14 ships of the African Union AMISOM had been escorted successfully and without incident to Mogadishu.

Nevertheless, the final conclusion must also be reflected from a critical perspective. The successful development shall not lead to a situation that – seeing the success in the mission – the willingness of Germany and other EU member states to provide forces for this operation will be reduced, as it has happened in the UN mission UNIFIL in the eastern Mediterranean.

Constant presence is required here, as well as the above mentioned cooperation with state authorities, whether Somali, Puntland or Somaliland, regardless of the official status of recognition of these entities.

The German Navy will steadily contribute to EU, NATO and UN missions as decided by the political organs, however, it cannot deploy additional units beyond the actual numbers (see table 1), since a fixed schedule of regeneration, exercise and (shipyard) maintenance must be maintained for each ship.

Despite all the success it must be first priority for the international community to improve conditions in the country of Somalia itself, to stabilize and improve the situation for the population (regardless which part of Somalia they are living in). The government has to be accepted by a large part of the respective population, to be able to start its official business, and the pirates must have a perspective to legally earn their living. Parallel to these measures, the (mostly illegally operated) fishing fleets of EU Member States and other nations, often including factory ships, must be banned from the Somali Basin.

Military measures can be regarded as a necessary, but not the fundamental component to stabilize Somalia. The maritime missions presented in this paper (Ocean Shield, Coalition Maritime Forces and in particular ATALANTA) are targeted operations to curb piracy in the Gulf of Aden and the Somali Basin.

## 12. OUTLOOK

The numbers and figures presented in the statistics section are confirmed by various sources, e.g. by the International Maritime Bureau (IMB) in their regular updates.

The recent reports have shown an increase in acts of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, especially off the coast of Nigeria, see figure 4. It is worth noting that these pirates have a totally different approach to their “business”: While Somali pirates hijack

a ship and take the crew as hostages to demand ransom, Gulf of Guinean pirates are aiming at the cargo and the valuables on board of the captured ship. This has already led to incidents where the crew was killed after the pirates took control of the ship, as a UN report in the Africa Renewal magazine shows:

“Unlike pirates along Somalia’s coast, who are often only after ransom, pirates in West Africa also steal goods, particularly oil. Many attacks end up with crew members injured or killed”<sup>9</sup>.



**Fig. 4.** Piracy Activity (reported) 2014, shown from West Africa to Southeast Asia

Source: International Chamber of Commerce.

The piracy in the Gulf of Guinea will probably become one of the maritime challenges for the second half of the present decade. Officials of multinational authorities and numerous states are already aware of this developing situation, but still have not decided on the appropriate measures for dealing with these pirates. It is desirable that – before the situation worsens in the Gulf of Guinea – actions are taken to prevent the rate of maritime criminality in the Southeastern Atlantic Ocean to explode similar to the Horn of Africa / Gulf of Aden region in the Northwestern Indian Ocean.

### 13. THE AUTHOR

Professor Frank Reininghaus is commander (senior grade) of the German Navy and has a 15 year history as aircraft operations officer aboard the BR 1150 "Atlantic", the predecessor of the P3-C "Orion", as well as numerous positions, e.g. as Deputy Director in the Central Command for Maritime Emergencies (Cuxhaven), as Shift

<sup>9</sup> UN report, Africa Renewal, Piracy in West Africa.



Director in the Joint Operations Centre of the German Armed Forces Operations Command (Potsdam) and as lecturer at the Command and Staff College (Hamburg). His connection to and interest in Africa results from his position as Shift Director in the multinational Joint Operations Centre of the European Union Operation EUFOR RD CONGO in 2006.

He holds a Master degree in Aerospace Engineering (M.Sc.) of the University of Armed Forces Germany and another Master degree in Peace and Security Studies (M.P.S.) of the University of Hamburg's Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy.

Since 2011 he holds a professorial chair in the master degree program Integrated Safety and Security Management (ISSM) at the University of Applied Sciences in Bremerhaven.

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