

The Effectiveness of Multinational Maritime Task Groups in Shipping Protection

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ABSTRACT: Now it is obvious that maritime transport is the core element of world economy but in region of the world security of maritime sea transport is threaten. The world countries take different activities to decrease such threats and make shipping more safety. One of such solution is multinational maritime operation provides by the Navy. The paper presents the analyze of such operation, which were taken in last two decades, especially in Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea, Strait of Malacca and in around the coast of Somalia. Paper present also lessons learned experience of such operation.

Nowadays it is obvious that maritime transport is the core element of world economy. For example European Seaport Organization (ESPO) claims that without seaports European Union would not exists as an economic world power also without seaports there would be no European internal markets¹. But such diagnosis is true for the whole world. It is obvious that safe and secure maritime transport is the most important element for world economic prosperity. But there are many regions all over the world where the security of maritime sea transport is threatened. The last years show that besides “classical” aspects of maritime safety (technical, navigational, environmental etc.) more and more important are asymmetric threats. The armed robbery, piracy and terrorism are serious challenge for world shipping.

The world countries take different activities to decrease such threats and make shipping more safety. One of such solution is multinational maritime operation provides by the Navy.

When we try to compare the regions where the maritime shipping is the most unsafe (for example data published by IMO or ICC International Maritime Bureau) and the areas of operations of multinational naval task groups it is easy to notice that there are not the same.

¹ Seaport policy, A practical guide for EU Policy makers, ESPO, 2004.

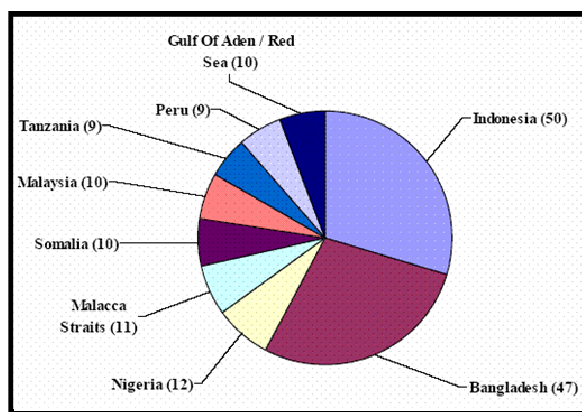


Fig. 1. The following nine locations shared more than two thirds of the total reported incidents in 2006

Source: ICC International Maritime Bureau, Piracy and armed robbery against ships, Annual report 2006

There was not piracy or armed robbery incidents in the Mediterranean Sea in 2006, but it is the area of NATO operation Active Endeavour. On the other hand there was not any multinational naval operation in the area around Bangladesh or Indonesia. There were almost 36.2% of world armed robbery and piracy incidents in 2006. It is interesting why such differences are?

The answer is not easy, because there are many different reason of such situation for example economy interest of the world, geography of main shipping lines, political situation and political competition among coastal states etc. Nowadays when we analyze the multinational naval operation first of all we must take under consideration operation presented below.

Combined Task Force - 150 (CTF-150) was established to monitor, inspect, board, and stop suspect shipping in the area of Gulf of Oman, Gulf of Aden, Arabian and Red Sea and finally Indian Ocean (the area of operation is presented below). The task force usually comprises 14 or 15 ships, helicopters and maritime patrol aircraft from such countries as Canada, France, Germany, Pakistan, United Kingdom and the United States. Other nations who have also participated in this task force include Australia, Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, Spain and Turkey. The command of the task force rotates between the different participating navies, and usually last between four to six months. It is easy to notice that for each participant countries the area of operation is vital for his economical prosperity.

There are two main reasons why the CTF - 150 includes such area of responsibilities. First of all it is easy notice that this area is crossing by the main world oil and gas shipping lines. In There are three choke points if world oil and gas transport (Sues Channel, Bad-el-Mandab and Hormuz) without secure and safe shipping the global economy can has serious problems.

Very often in the waters around the Somalia heavily armed pirates with guns and grenades have attacked ships and fired upon them. The eastern and northeastern coast are high - risk areas for piracy attacks and hijackings for ransom. Usually the ransom for hijacked crew is between 100 to 500 thousand US. For example in 2006 almost 47% of world hijackings had happened around Somalia. Many attacks occurred event 390 nautical miles form the coast. The pirates use the “mother - ships” to launch attacks at these distances.

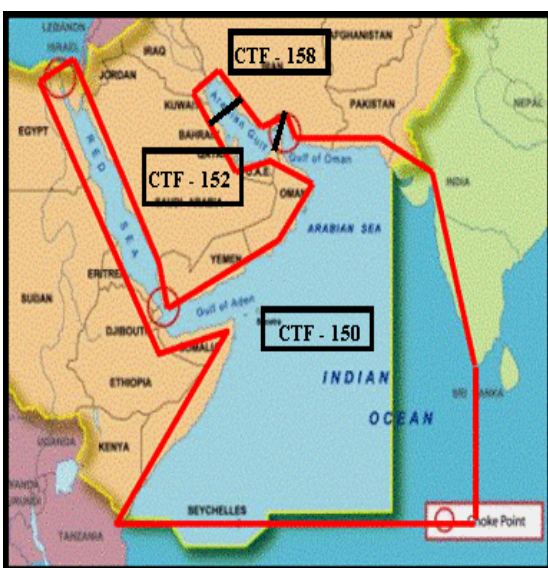


Fig. 2. The area of responsibilities of CTF - 150

Sources: UK Maritime Trade Operations – Dubai, Briefing 8 June 2006, British High Commission

Besides CTF – 150 also others multinational task group operate in the Arabian Gulf. There are CTF – 152 and CTF – 158. Their main area of operation is as follow:

CTF-158 – Northern Gulf responsible for protection of the Iraqi Oil and port infrastructure.

CTF-152 – Central and Southern Arabian Gulf conducting Maritime Interdiction Operations (MIOPS).

CTF-150 – Arabian Sea, Indian Ocean, Horn of Africa and Red Sea – conducting MIOPS as for CTF152 but also concentrating forces against piracy off Somalia and the Horn of Africa.

Table 1. The example of successful maritime actions of CTF – 150 from June 2005 to March 2006

Date	Accident
8 June 2005	Successfully conducted the boarding of the vessel <i>Safari</i> in international waters, leading to the seizure of 2.3 tons of hashish.
21 January 2006	Ten suspected pirates were captured after the US ship stopped a dhow about 54 miles of the coast of Somalia. Of the 26 men aboard the dhow, 10 were Somalis and 16 were from India.
22 January 2006	captured a suspected pirate vessel in the Indian Ocean as part of an ongoing effort to help maintain law and order in the region
18 March 2006	Two US Navy warships exchanged gunfire with people suspected of being pirates off the coast of Somalia, killing one of them and wounding five. The battle started about 25 miles off the Somali coast when the US warships spotted a 30-foot fishing boat towing skiffs and prepared to board the vessels.

Sources: UK Maritime Trade Operations – Dubai, Briefing 8 June 2006, British High Commission

The most famous naval operation is Active Endeavour, which is conducted by NATO. It was one of the first military actions taken by NATO in response to an invocation of Article 5. On 6 December 2001, “NATO continues to demonstrate the strength of its resolve and the solidarity of its member nations by conducting this operation.”

On 29 April 2003, Task Force Endeavour began boarding operations following a NAC (North Atlantic Council) decision to enhance the effectiveness of the current naval operations against suspected terrorist activities in the Mediterranean. The boarding operations are conducted in accordance with the rules of international law and are of a compliant nature. Since the start of the operation more than 80 000 merchant vessels have been monitored (as of end 2006) by the forces of Active Endeavour. The surveillance operation utilizes ship, aircraft and submarine assets to build a picture of maritime activity in the Area of Operations.

On 16 March 2004 NATO announced that the Area of Operations of Active Endeavour was extended to the whole Mediterranean Sea and that EAPC/PfP (Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council/Partnership for Peace) Partners, Mediterranean Dialogue countries and other selected nations will be asked to support it, including through their active participation.

Since its inception, the ships of Active Endeavour have monitored over 79,000 ships (as of April 12, 2006) and conducted voluntary boarding of over 100. They have also escorted over 480 ships through the Strait of Gibraltar until escorting was suspended in 2004.

NATO further strengthened its relationships with countries across the region, particularly with members of NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia. Together, they work to share information about regional maritime traffic, giving all members a clearer picture of vessels operating in their territorial waters.

Georgia and Albania, members of NATO's Partnership for Peace, also have entered into talks with the alliance to find ways to support the mission, while Russia and Ukraine both finalized agreements with NATO to support Active Endeavor, with members of Russia's Black Sea Fleet joining the mission in February 2006.

Table 2. The example of successful maritime actions of Active Endeavor naval forces

4 December 2001	The rescue operation of 84 civilians from a stricken oil rig. In high winds and heavy seas, the Italian helicopter of the ALISEO removed all 84 workers from the oil rig in 14 flights
2 January 2002	Spanish frigate and Netherlands oilier, the UK naval vessel and the Greek Coast Guard provided life-saving support to the passengers of a sinking ship in the Eastern Mediterranean off Crete
23 March 2006	NATO forces alerted the Hellenic Coast Guard of a vessel named "M/V Crystal". The coast guard units intercepted the ship and arrested the captain and crew who were attempting to smuggle 126 illegal immigrants

Sources: <http://www.nato.org/Operation Active Endeavour>

In 2006 according the "Piracy and armed robbery against ships" published by ICC International Maritime Bureau there was not unlawful incidents against maritime shipping the Mediterranean. But there is high risk of terrorist threats in this sea. Mediterranean is the vital maritime area not only for European but also world

economy, so it is the main reason of NATO activities.

The last one of multination naval forces establish for securing the shipping lines of transport is BLACKSEAFOR. For the purpose of enhancing peace and stability in the Black Sea area, by increasing regional co-operation, and improving good relationship, the idea of establishing a multinational naval on-call peace task force "The Black Sea Naval Co-Operation Task Group-BLACKSEAFOR" has been initiated by Turkey.

Six Black sea countries, that are Turkey, Russia, Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria and Georgia, will sign the Black Sea Naval Cooperation Task Group (BLACKSEAFOR).

Their establishment agreement is the most important historical document, which directs the activities of the BLACKSEAFOR. The agreement consists of general principles, tasks, force structure, political and military aspects, command & control, and administration of the force.

The BLACKSEAFOR is composed of minimum 4-6 ships which are allocated from the parties, including the one command and control ship. Main types of the warships to be assigned to the force are:

- Frigate/Destroyer (FF/DD);
- Corvette/Patrol Boat (FS/PB);
- Mine Counter Measures Ship (MCM);
- Amphibious Ship (LS);
- Auxiliary Ship and Vessel (AX).

The BLACKSEAFOR may also be available for possible employment in the United Nations (UN) or the Organization For Security And Cooperation In Europe (OSCE)-mandated operations. It could also participate in other types of international activities with the aims and tasks of the BLACKSEAFOR.

It is worth to mention about Malacca Straits. It is one of the most important areas for world maritime transportation, and in this area takes place many unlawful incidents against maritime shipping. But the multinational navy activities are rather limited. The people who are not familiar with political situation in this region may ask "what is the reason of such situation?" First of all there is a political, military and economical rivalry between the states of "Malacca straits region". The coastal countries are not willing to accept the support of other countries for example United States, China or Japan. Also geographical conditions (many small islands) make the area excellent for piracy activities. The states in the region claim that they are able to protect shipping in his territorial waters on their own.

On the other hand the situation around Africa. In the west coast of Africa takes place most of the piracy accidents (36 accidents), but there is not an area of operation of multinational naval task forces. The explanation is rather easy. This area is not the core area for world shipping. Especially for the most developed countries of the world.

It is important to notice that multinational naval operations usually take place first of all in maritime areas which are important not for world communities but for world powers. On the other hand the coastal countries of such region must ask for support or give the permission for such operation. And finally political, economic and military factors have huge impact on success.

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