



Rear Admiral Fabio AGOSTINI

Operational Commander

New Force Commander Commodore MIKROPOULOS

and farewell to Admiral Ettore Socci

19 October 2020

Commodore MIKROPOULOS,

Force Headquarters staff, I am truly happy to be here today to welcome the Hellenic Ship ADRIAS as flagship of the most important Common Security and Defence Policy military operation of the European Union.

Equally, after having worked for 6 months with you, Theo, I very glad to hand-over to you the Tactical Command of the Task Force 464 as the newly appointed Force Commander of Operation IRINI.

Some of the FHQ members here today have gone through a very difficult period. Unfortunately, you have witnessed the evil strength of the Coronavirus. The way it can affect our personnel and also the way it can suddenly provoke operational disruptions. I have followed all your vicissitudes during the last weeks and I am very happy that all of you have managed to overcome it successfully and without any significant health consequence. All in all, what we went through has to be accepted as an important lesson learned that will lead us to better implement and – if possible – reinforce the necessary precautionary measures to avoid future spreading of the virus.

Commodore Mikropoulos, I am sure you will work to ensure the success of the mission with the passion and loyalty you have already demonstrated as Chief of Staff of the OHQ.

During the 6 months that you spent in the OHQ, I have had the pleasure to know you well and to appreciate your high level skills as Navy Commander, always focused to the achievements of the operational objectives with the necessary care of the personal needs of the staff under your command.

Despite all the difficulties and all the restrictions imposed by the current pandemic, I strongly wanted to be here today. It is meaningful for me to be close to the personnel that with enormous personal sacrifices, with passion, determination and professionalism serves within the Operation that I have the pleasure and the honour to command.

I am here also to express the deep appreciation and support of the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Mr. Josep Borrell and of the Chairman of the European Union Military Committee, General Claudio Graziano. Both of them, and myself, are extremely grateful to Member States contributing to the Operation with assets and personnel. And therefore, in this particular case, the note of credit and appreciation goes namely to Greece.



As you know, the mandate that the Council has given to us is not easy to be accomplished, especially under the current circumstances.

Despite Operation IRINI started in full Covid-19 pandemic and with a limited number of available assets, we managed to achieve significant results in terms collection of information and deterrence effect both in the arms embargo and the oil smuggling fields. As you most probably know, we also prevented the delivery of Jet Fuel to a port in Cyrenaica, performing the first-ever European Union diversion operation. And this was done, also thanks to the Hellenic authorities support, that provided a Port of Diversion under very urgent circumstances.

Today, in handing over the Force Commander duties to Commodore Mikropoulos, I like to recall the outstanding job done by his predecessor, Admiral SOCCI, and express my sincere gratitude and appreciation for the results he has achieved during his mandate, in spite of countless difficulties.

Indeed, over the last six months, Admiral SOCCI heavily contributed with tireless dedication and determination to the achievement of amazing – and probably unexpected – results. IRINI's assets performed nearly 900 hailings and more than 25 friendly approaches, monitoring approximately 15 ports and oil terminals as well as 25 airports and landing strips, with more than 100 military flights or possible military-related air cargos going back and forth to Libya from different countries. Thanks to this endless monitoring activity, the OHQ could produce 15 Special Reports that have been sent to the United Nation Panel of Experts for Libya and 1 inspection report, sent to the UN Sanction Committee.

Our efforts have targeted both warring parties in Libya and their respective supporters in full respect of the required impartiality and balanced approach. The evidences sent to the competent UN bodies are the essence of our mandate. It is important for you to know the full process, including the ultimate goal of the daily activity that you will undertake soon. Your job is meaningful. What you do in the Area of Operations has tremendous impact at the higher political level!

As said, the work done by Admiral SOCCI and his staff was crucial for the results that have been achieved so far.

Knowing Commodore Mikropoulos, the strength of his international staff and the strength of the Hellenic sailors, I am more than confident that you will be successful too and able to resume the activity at sea along the way successfully paved by the previous Force Commander and the previous flagship.

Therefore, I wish FAIR WIND to Commodore Mikropoulos, to the FHQ and to the Greek Ship ADRIAS and her proud crew.

Thank you all ευχαριστώ πολύ (efcharistó polý)

Operational Commander Admiral Fabio Agostini

