

The first meeting of EU Maritime Operations Commanders starts

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Today and tomorrow, Operation EUNAVFOR MED IRINI hosts the first edition of the “EU Maritime Operations Commanders’ Meeting”.

The spread of maritime instability, the behavior of non-state actors, the use of dual-use vessels, and gaps in information sharing affect all three EU maritime operations in different ways. This shared vision confirms the value of greater operational alignment between European maritime forces, that are Irimi, Atalanta, and Aspides.

This meeting - the first of the EU naval forces - takes place in Rome, at the Centocelle air base, at Irimi headquarters, and aims to achieve greater operational coordination between the European Union's maritime forces: Operation Eunavfor Med Irimi, which is under the command of Rear Admiral Marco Casapieri; Operation Eunavfor Atalanta, commanded by Vice Admiral Ignacio Villanueva and based in Rota, Spain; and Operation Eunavfor Aspides, commanded by Rear Admiral Vasileios Gryparis and based in Larissa, Greece.

The Mediterranean region has been the cradle of many civilizations over the centuries and a hub for trade and commerce, but it also continues to experience conflict and instability. A multitude of geopolitical crises and tensions have undermined its stability, and new tools are needed to shape a vision of inclusive and shared security.

This area is naturally linked to the main communication routes in the Red Sea, the western Indian Ocean, the Gulf of Aden, the Arabian Sea, the Gulf of Oman, and the Gulf.

“The first meeting of European maritime operations commanders represents a unique opportunity to meet, exchange information and experiences, and share operational proposals. Our mutual priority is to strengthen maritime safety, security, and stand united in facing the challenges of our time. Every effort we make together helps protect our people, our seas, and our common future”, emphasized **Rear Admiral Marco Casapieri**, Commander of **Operation Eunavfor Med Irimi** and meeting host, at the opening of the proceedings.

“Operation Atalanta maintains a constant effort in supporting the shipping industry and protecting the sea lines in our Area of Operations. This meeting is an opportunity to strengthen synergies among the European Union maritime operations to improve our common goals”, pointed out the **Vice Admiral Ignacio Villanueva**, Commander of the **Operation Atalanta** deployed in the western Indian Ocean and the Red Sea.

“The EU Naval Operations symbolize more than a temporary response to a crisis. They demonstrate the EU's ability to act as a steadfast and reliable maritime security provider. Our presence is a long-term commitment to the principles of freedom, safety, and stability on the high seas”, underlines the Commander of **Operation Aspides**, **Rear Admiral Vasileios Gryparis** which monitors areas of the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean, and the Gulf.

The two intense days of discussions and exchanges of ideas during the Rome Meeting will be enriched by operational proposals at the end of each panel, to enable the staff of the commanders of the three European maritime operations to engage in effective dialogue right from the start.

The first panel, entitled “**Maritime domain awareness: Russian Shadow Fleet (RSF) and Critical Maritime Infrastructure (CMI)**”, is dedicated to analyzing the actions of the Russian shadow fleet and its impact on international security. It will be an opportunity to take stock of the monitoring and protection of critical maritime infrastructure, including submarine cables and energy assets.

The second panel, entitled “**Outside EU environment: challenge and opportunities**”, will address maritime security outside the European Union, focusing on emerging challenges and strategic risks in key regions of the world. Current geopolitical dynamics, hybrid threats, and the protection of maritime lines of communication will be examined.

The third panel, entitled “**Mutual support mechanisms, interoperability, and best practices**”, will focus on cooperation and synergy between the three European operations Irini, Aspides, and Atalanta. Here, the topics of training, exercises, and common protocols to be implemented will be addressed.

Essentially, the keywords for this event are interoperability, improved performance in information sharing, and new opportunities to consolidate maritime operations at the highest level under the auspices of the European Union.

NOTES

The meeting is closed to the public and Chatham House rules are observed.

For interviews and information:

media_pio@euohq.difesa.it
media_analyst@euohq.difesa.it

+39 06 4691 26760