



EUNAVFOR – Disruption of Pirate Logistic Dumps (DPLD) on the Shoreline: A Necessary Action?

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Background

The EU's engagement in the Horn of Africa is defined by the region's geo-strategic importance, the longstanding EU engagement with countries of the region, the EU's desire to help lift the people from poverty into self-sustaining economic growth, and the need for the EU to protect its own citizens from security threats. Piracy in the Indian Ocean has been a growing threat to international shipping, security and development from the middle of the last decade. In response to the rising levels of piracy in the Western Indian Ocean, the EU formed the European Union Naval Force and began Operation ATALANTA in December 2008 under the European Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and in accordance with various UN Security Council Resolutions.

Piracy is a symptom of a wider malaise, reflecting Somalia's recent traumatic history, the fragmentary state of its government and the largely lawless nature of much of the country. These fundamental problems, together with a lack of alternative means of employment, make piracy an appealing option. Only by addressing these root causes will the problem of piracy be overcome, and thus the use of EUNAVFOR to counter acts of piracy is simply one line of activity in a comprehensive approach that the EU has adopted which will address each of the challenges that face Somalia.

Countering the Pirate Threat at Sea

All activity conducted by EUNAVFOR is an integral part of the comprehensive approach and the wide spread of activity that the EU undertakes throughout the region. EUNAVFOR actively seeks out pirate groups and disrupts their activities. Until recently, this disruption took place



exclusively at sea but on May 15, 2012 it demonstrated the ability and willingness to take action against pirate equipment ashore. These disruptions amount to the denial of the equipment that the pirates need to operate, thus preventing them from mounting attacks on innocent shipping in the Indian Ocean and Gulf of Aden. Data collated since 2008 suggests that the Counter Piracy (CP) forces of the EU, of NATO and of the Anti-Piracy coalition are becoming more effective in preventing attacks before they happen. In addition, the success rate of those attacks which are mounted has decreased sharply as a result of the self-protection measures taken by the ships and the embarkation of Private Armed Security Teams.

Countering the Pirate Threat Ashore

The Council of the European Union extended ATALANTA's mandate from December 2012 to December 2014 and at the same time extended Operation ATALANTA's area of operations to include Somali coastal territory and internal waters allowing us to disrupt the pirates before they take to the water. This has given credible and visual evidence to the local community of the support that EUNAVFOR is providing to the local authorities to bear down on this criminality. The increasingly positive support for the operation from Somalia and the wider international community, suggests an underlying desire to counter the criminal pirate gangs at source and bolstering regional authorities to develop the confidence to act to continue their effort to re-establish the rule of law.

The disruption on the beach is a tactical shift of focus, creating a disruptive effect in areas previously considered to belong to the pirates, damaging their sense of impunity and opens the door for the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and regional authorities to take action to combat the criminal pirate gangs. It is endorsed by the TFG. Initial indications demonstrate that there are several areas of benefit for the CP Forces. The pirates will be forced to change their behaviour or re-locate bases further inland decreasing their ability to deploy at short notice and, as importantly, may have a detrimental effect on their standing as a pirate, creating friction with rivals, subordinates and clans. With the wide range of camps along the coast of Somalia, there is ample opportunity to disrupt criminal activity when conditions are deemed appropriate.



Maintenance of this pressure on the beaches, as part of the comprehensive approach, will assist in allowing Somali authorities to create the suitable security infrastructure to permit stabilisation and economic regeneration throughout the country over the long term.

While these tactics are a new initiative for EUNAVFOR, they should be viewed as an extension of the successful disruptive actions that EUNAVFOR has previously undertaken at sea. DPLD operations are performed in accordance with International Law and all force is commensurate with the constabulary nature of the ATALANTA mission. All action has been, and will remain, proportionate and precise with small calibre weapons used to specifically focus on pirate equipment following in-depth surveillance prior to the disruption.

Conclusion

While EUNAVFOR recognizes that the extension of the counter-piracy mandate will not solve the problem of piracy off the Horn of Africa by itself, it sees the mandate change permitting DPLD operations as a positive, necessary move. For limited tactical activity, the disruptive effect on the pirates can be disproportionately large through damage to their business model. The impact of sound and visual stimulus during a disruption on communities adjacent to the pirate beach cannot be underestimated. Crucially, the extension has been welcomed by the Transnational Federal Government as well as regional entities.

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