

Roles of the Navies in a new Maritime Security Environment –
Capabilities Requirements

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am glad to be here with you in this very important event. Further, I feel honored to have the opportunity to address such an esteemed audience.

I will present my thoughts on the enduring role of the Navies in facing current and emerging maritime security challenges. I will also suggest that Navies need to be supported by new capabilities and instruments, even though it holds true that “high end” capabilities generally have “low end” applicability, while the opposite is hardly true.

There is no doubt that security of the maritime domain, in terms of securing the international maritime trade and energy routes, has become instrumental in ensuring the smooth function of global markets and industry. But it is also a fact that the multi-faceted interconnection of national economies has encouraged an array of state or non state actors to take advantage of maritime routes on the High Seas and involve themselves in:

- launching terrorist attacks,
- smuggling illegal goods and weapons,
- conducting human or drug trafficking, and
- threatening vulnerable maritime infrastructure or the disruption of free navigation through important transit choke points.

Illegal immigration through sea routes continues to put pressure on the maritime borders of countries around the world, from Australia to south European countries like Greece, which is at the crossroads of Asia and Europe. At the same time, Maritime Security becomes even more demanding by the apparent fragmentation of the global maritime governance system.

Additionally, pirate groups which occasionally operate from lands where the rule of law has collapsed, threaten the smooth flow of raw material

to the international markets. The subsequent rise of insurance cost for sea-traded commodities stands as a by-product of poor maritime security in critical zones. I would not argue that piracy has brought sea trade to a standstill, this is not the case. But there are consequences. According to the US think tank “Oceans beyond Piracy”, 6.6 to 6.9 billion dollars was approximately the overall cost of Somali piracy for 2012.

Even though the root causes of piracy are attributed to deteriorating security on the ground, piracy may be contained **to a certain extent** by Naval Forces. This is indeed one of the great achievements of European Union Operation “ATALANTA”, the first ever maritime security operation that was launched by the European Council and was commanded by a Hellenic Navy Flag Officer at its first steps.

Security of energy supply routes and sea-bed resources is another important challenge. For my country, Greece, it is currently valued on a completely different basis, taking into account the recent interest of international corporations for oil or natural gas reserves in western and southern sea blocks. This development, coupled to the final decisions on the Trans Adriatic Pipeline earlier this summer, may change the security parameters in the Ionian Sea and may call for a more intense presence of the Hellenic Navy.

So, having briefly described the new maritime security environment, an answer is needed on what the roles and added value of Navies are in addressing these challenges. As “Defense” is the Navies’ main component of their mission statement, is there a role for them in supporting Maritime Security? The Atlantic Alliance and the European Union have given a clear affirmative answer to that question.

It is widely recognized that the fragmentation of maritime regimes calls for holistic approaches, the development of synergies between military, law enforcement and civilian institutions, and, above all, the joining of forces among Allies and Partners. Combating crime at sea and responding to other

security challenges is much more efficient when investing in regional and international security protocols, which make provisions for:

- joint maritime surveillance networks,
- intelligence sharing,
- affordable strategic sealift,
- and contingency planning for the effective evacuation of citizens from crisis zones.

For example, Greece conducted one of the largest non-combatant evacuation operations in Libya in 2011, with the support of the Hellenic Navy, evacuating hundreds of Greeks and thousands of Chinese nationals, among others. This particular operation underscored the everlasting strategic location of Crete and Souda Naval Base.

Consequently, all the components of the security protocols I mentioned demand adequate means of naval power projection and intelligence gathering, **And there lays the role of Navies in the new security environment.** What I say is that some Navies may not be institutionally authorized to pursue crime at sea, as they are not law enforcement organizations like the Coast Guards, but they may credibly support such operations:

- through intelligence sharing, and
- even with direct intervention, when maritime challenges can be contained only by their “high end” means.

Allow me to select an array of essential roles the Navies perform, **which may have a profound effect on Maritime Security.** Maritime Interdiction is the first coming to mind. Enforcing arms embargo is one of the core tasks of a Task Group. Naval forces have to make sure that no weapons or other hazardous material would be smuggled into crisis zones

On Maritime Interdiction, Greece has made a substantial contribution to our Allies and Partners, by providing the services of the NATO Maritime Interdiction Operational Training Center in Souda Bay, Crete. NMIOTC is an

important asset, founded and funded by Greece, but multinationally manned. I extend an open invitation to all of your navies, who have not yet visited the Center, to send personnel and vessels to, what we believe is, a very useful training product.

Illicit activity on the High Seas usually seeks to project itself on land. Thus, power projection from the sea on lawless lands, which fuel poor maritime security and may cause contagious effects elsewhere, is important. Such operations, already conducted by ATALANTA Frigates, may take the form of eliminating the shore camps of pirate groups, which are used as forward logistic sites to sustain their operations. However, allow me to stress that there is much to be done, in terms of concept development, tactics, coordination, and means, in Navies' better understanding developments on the ground and how best to have an influence on them.

Mine countermeasures operations ensure that the approaches to the main ports in crisis zones remain accessible to international humanitarian aid. Mine Warfare has been and is expected to remain one of the most challenging naval tasks in the foreseeable future, due to the fact that laying a sea minefield does not necessarily require the deployment of specialized units. At the same time, mines come in different forms and modes of detonation, are relatively cheap and have a disproportionate effect.

The risk of a minefield delays the conduct of critical tasks and then would demand time and resources to conduct a full-scale clearing. Just think of an imaginative scenario of minefields interrupting or even forbidding international shipping through Straits of critical importance, for example Gibraltar, or of a super tanker sinking in the Strait of Malacca, causing a detour of about 500 miles and two extra days at sea. Wouldn't you agree that such development would have destabilizing effects on international economy? I certainly think so.

Finally, let me point your attention to Search and Rescue operations at sea. Commanding Officers are called to combine international instruments,

laws and regulations with national legislation, restrictions and procedures. It is not my intention to discuss in detail the provisions of international law on Search and Rescue. But in any case, a person in distress at sea, either in peace or times of tension, always remains a human that needs assistance. There is no doubt that terms such as “nationality”, “jurisdiction”, “sovereignty”, “areas of responsibility” and “maritime zones” have legal implications. Nevertheless, saving lives at risk is paramount for the Commanding Officer.

It is becoming obvious that the new maritime security environment calls for the development of new instruments, tools and synergies. Wide scale maritime surveillance cannot be achieved if credible multilateral networks are not developed and new intelligence sharing protocols are not enforced. The European Union has stepped up its efforts on this front, by implementing wide-ranging information sharing programs the recent years, namely the Common Information Sharing Environment and the European Defense Agency’s MARSUR program. The decision of all the Ionian and Adriatic Sea Navies to examine the feasibility of interconnecting their national surveillance systems is another example of introducing new tools is enhancing regional Maritime Security.

“Pooling and Sharing” in the EU and “Smart Defense” or “Connected Forces” in NATO have yet to deliver worth-mentioning results in Maritime Security, mainly because in times of austerity, spending on Research and Development shrinks, while some Navies decide that an array of capabilities is too costly to be preserved. There is a fine line though between shrinking defense budgets and losing capabilities. If a capability is totally lost from a Navy’s inventory, the financial burden of re-introducing it after a long period, in terms of personnel training and infrastructure, would be disproportionately grave.

I assume that apart from the revolutionary changes on intelligence sharing, new capabilities on providing early warning to the illegal transportation of chemical-biological-radiological-nuclear material is of utmost importance. NATO has increased investment on experimentation and

development of new devices that may spot such concealed material. The NMIOTC has been the host of a number of promising CBRN field trials and experimentation the recent years, which highlights its added value to the maritime community.

Concluding let me summarize some of the main points of my briefing:

a. Navies have a vital role to play in the new maritime security environment, as it is only the Navies that can provide adequate means of naval power projection, sustainability on the High Seas and extensive intelligence gathering structures.

b. Austerity exerts pressure on states which may ultimately lead to the loss of core naval capabilities. I have argued that when a capability is lost all together, re-introducing it after a long period would only be possible at a high cost.

c. New capabilities in the form of multinational intelligence sharing protocols and early warning to the illegal transportation of CBRN material, are necessary.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it goes without saying that the internationally traded commodities through the wider areas of the Gulf and the Mediterranean Sea are instrumental in supporting global prosperity and stability. It is widely recognized that maritime security in both areas may be achieved only through inter-agency approaches, combining military, law enforcement and civil efforts. However, in all operational plans, the added value of Navies in responding to the new maritime challenges is indisputable.

The Hellenic Navy seeks to remain a primary security provider in eastern Mediterranean. Thus, we stand ready to bear our share and contribute to the collective effort for stability, security and peace, along with the protection of national integrity and interests.

Thank you for your attention.