

Piracy off the Coast of Somalia

International efforts to combat piracy off the Somali coast gained traction in 2012. Patrols by naval forces and increased protective measures by ships, including the addition of private guards, significantly reduced the number of successful hijackings near Somalia. However, Somali pirates continue to pose a serious threat to international security, and incidents in the region still constitute more than half the total number of pirate attacks worldwide.¹

In March 2012 the European Union renewed the mandate of the EU Naval Force Against Piracy (EU NAVFOR Somalia), also known as Operation Atalanta, until 2014, while significantly extending the area it covers. For the first time, EU naval ships are allowed to patrol Somali waters close to shore and EU forces may conduct operations on Somali territory. However, this new mandate does not allow for the deployment of troops on the ground. In May the mission conducted its first land raid using helicopters and warships to destroy pirate crafts and undermine onshore safe havens, with the full support of the Somali government. While this latest mandate development helps tackle onshore dynamics, there is a potential for mission creep

and exacerbation of the already fractured security environment, which lacks sufficient coordination.

NATO's Operation Ocean Shield (OOS) has worked to develop the capacity of countries in the region while patrolling waterways since 2009. It used the lull in pirate attacks during the 2012 monsoon season to survey and gather information about the Somali coast and identify likely launch locations for pirates. In addition, the operation successfully thwarted a number of pirate attacks with the help of other maritime counterpiracy forces in the region. NATO allies agreed to renew the mission's mandate through 2014.

EU Naval Force Against Piracy (EU NAVFOR Somalia)

• Authorization Date	10 November 2008 (EU Council Joint Action 2008/851/CFSP)
• Start Date	8 December 2008
• Head of Mission	Rear Admiral Duncan L. Potts (Malta)
• Budget	\$10.9 million (1 October 2011–30 September 2012)
• Strength as of 30 September 2012	Troops: 1,556 National Civilian Staff: 30

Antipiracy organizations including the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS) and Shared Awareness and Deconfliction (SHADE) continued combating piracy through a number of methods. The CGPCS prepared best practices for private security personnel operating off the coast of Somalia, and promoted communication among its members. SHADE, a voluntary coordination group for counterpiracy organizations, assisted with joint patrols and communication on warship movements among navies.

Political progress in Somalia along with the strides made against al-Shabaab

Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (continued)

could begin to alleviate root causes of piracy, including poverty and lawlessness onshore. A new prison facility funded by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) accepted its first detainees at the end of March 2012, helping to improve Somalia's capacity to prosecute pirates. However, given the small number of legal professionals, along with limited resources and a dangerous security environment, increasing Somalia's ability to domestically tackle the judicial aspects of piracy will be a long-term endeavor. As a result, regional efforts will continue to be crucial. The new Regional Anti-Piracy Prosecution and Intelligence Coordination Centre (RAPPICC) in the Seychelles, funded by Britain, will help in this effort by enabling the international community

Operation Ocean Shield (OOS)

- Authorization Date 17 August 2009
- Force Commander Rear Admiral Antonio Natale (Italy)

to target piracy kingpins and financiers and fight impunity.

Though attacks were down in 2012, pirates are already adapting their tactics to international pressure, a threat that could reverse the successes of the past year. Pirates acquired sophisticated weaponry, including mines and shoulder-held missile launchers, some smuggled out of Libya after the fall of the Qaddafi regime, and have also increased their operations farther

off the coast of Somalia to avoid naval forces. Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea is also increasingly threatening international security, and could lead to an overstretching of limited antipiracy resources. The success of the past year is not irreversible. Addressing the root causes of piracy, continuing maritime efforts, and bolstering onshore mechanisms will be necessary to ensure continued progress.

Note: 1. "U.S. Reports That Piracy off Africa Has Plunged," *New York Times*, 28 August 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/29/world/africa/piracy-around-horn-of-africa-has-plunged-us-says.html>.