

Military Build-up in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf: Israel and NATO sign Framework Agreement

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Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)
Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)
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On the 16th of October, NATO and Israel signed a major framework agreement, which essentially establishes close cooperation between Israel and the Atlantic Alliance in NATO led “counterterrorism” under Operation Active Endeavour. “NATO and Israel have also finalised the modalities of Israel’s contribution to the NATO maritime Operation Active Endeavour.”

In practice, this operation in which Israel is participating coincides with the NATO naval build-up off the coast of Lebanon and Syria, which is presented to public opinion as a “peace-keeping” operation under a mandate emanating from the UN Security Council.

This Israel-NATO framework agreement not only has a bearing on the military build-up in the Eastern Mediterranean, which in practice is directed against Syria and Lebanon, it is also related to the massive deployment of US naval forces in the Persian Gulf, opposite Iran.

Two US naval task forces are currently in place opposite Iran in the Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea, including the USS Enterprise Strike Group and the Iwo Jima Expeditionary Strike Group. The latter consists of the amphibious transport dock USS Nashville, the guided-missile destroyers USS Cole and USS Bulkeley, the guided-missile cruiser USS Philippine Sea, the attack submarine USS Albuquerque, and the dock landing ship USS Whidbey Island. (Debka, [Click for details](#))

NATO/Israel Cooperation
in the framework of the Mediterranean Dialogue

16 October 2006

Today NATO and Israel finalised the Individual Cooperation Programme (ICP) under the enhanced Mediterranean Dialogue.

NATO and Israel have also finalised the modalities of Israel’s contribution to the NATO maritime Operation Active Endeavour.

At their Istanbul Summit, NATO’s Heads of State and Government decided to offer Mediterranean Dialogue partner countries the possibility to agree with NATO Individual Cooperation Programmes and to contribute to Operation Active Endeavour, in the context of the More Ambitious and Expanded Framework for the Mediterranean Dialogue approved at

the Summit.

Israel's decision to contribute to Operation Active Endeavour and to finalise the Individual Cooperation Programme with NATO, represent a significant step forward in the cooperation with the Alliance.

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<http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2006/p06-123e.htm>

Operation Active Endeavour

March 2004

http://www.afsouth.nato.int/JFCN_Operations/ActiveEndeavour/Endeavour/Endeavour.htm

The operation's mission is to conduct naval operations in the Mediterranean to actively demonstrate NATO's resolve and solidarity. Operation Active Endeavour is one of the measures resulting from NATO's decision to implement Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, expanding the options available in the campaign against terrorism.

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For the first time in NATO's history, Alliance assets have been deployed in support of Article 5 operations. NATO has contributed Airborne Warning and Control Systems aircraft (AWACS) to the United States and has also deployed elements of its Standing Naval Forces to the Eastern Mediterranean. AWACS provide air surveillance and early warning capability by transmitting data to command and control centres on land, sea or in the air. The naval assets of Standing Naval Force Mediterranean (STANAVFORMED), which were participating in Exercise Destined Glory 2001 off the southern coast of Spain, were re-assigned in order to provide an immediate NATO military presence in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Operation Active Endeavour is conducted by Vice Admiral Ferdinando Sanfelice di Monteforte, Italian Navy, Commander Allied Naval Forces Southern Europe (NAVSOUTH) from his headquarters in Naples, Italy, through a Task Force deployed to the Eastern Mediterranean, named Task Force Endeavour (TFE) and, from 10 March 2003, a Task Force deployed to the Strait of Gibraltar (STROG).

Prolonged operations in the Eastern Mediterranean are achieved through rotation of NATO's Standing Naval Forces; STANAVFORMED and STANAVFORLANT . To enable sustainability, TFE uses facilities and assets made available by member states in the region.

TFE initially comprised the nine ships of the Standing Naval Forces Mediterranean (SNFM), which — as well as STANAVFORLANT — is part of NATO's Immediate Reaction Forces (IRFs). The IRFs primary mission is to deploy rapidly to areas of tension and crisis. By definition as an IRF, the Task Force is trained to conduct a wide-range of maritime operations. These capabilities are regularly tested in exercises throughout the Southern Region.

During the first two months of deployment to the Eastern Mediterranean, STANAVFORMED established contact with about 1,700 merchant vessels and conducted 32 replenishments at sea to allow continuous maritime operations in the area. Shipborne helicopters flew more

than 1,000 hours. Elements of SNFM also visited Souda Bay, Crete and Aksaz, Turkey.

“As the world is united against terrorism,” said COMNAVSOUTH during a news conference on 6 December 2001, “NATO continues to demonstrate the strength of its resolve and the solidarity of its member nations by conducting Operation Active Endeavour. The versatility and value of maritime immediate reaction forces is once more being highlighted.”

NATO air and maritime assets during patrol and escorting operations in the Strait of Gibraltar.

On 4 February 2003, the North Atlantic Council decided to extend Operation Active Endeavour to include escorting non-military ships travelling through the Strait of Gibraltar to maintain security in the area and to secure the safe transit of designated Allied ships. The narrow Strait of Gibraltar is widely recognised as a potential site of terrorist attacks, and so the measure was agreed as a precaution. The first NATO escort was conducted on 10 March 2003, by units of Standing Naval Force Atlantic, supported by US and Portuguese Maritime Patrol Aircraft and Spanish helicopters. Subsequently the Strait of Gibraltar operations have been led by the Spanish and have comprised Spanish frigates, Danish, Norwegian and German Patrol Boats and aircraft from Spain, Portugal and the US. Since these operations began, 414 vessels have been escorted (as of 17 March 2004).

NATO began monitoring operations in the Eastern Mediterranean in October 2001.

Since the start of the operation about 41,000 merchant vessels have been monitored (as of 17 March 2004) by the forces of Active Endeavour. The surveillance operation utilises ship, aircraft and submarine assets to build a picture of maritime activity in the Area of Operations.

On 29 April 2003, Task Force Endeavour began boarding operations following a NAC decision to enhance the effectiveness of the current naval operations against suspected terrorist activities in the Mediterranean. The boarding operations are conducted in accordance with the rules of international law and are of a compliant nature. 37 vessels have been boarded (as of 8 January 2004).

On 16 March 2003 NATO announced that the Area of Operations of operation Active Endeavour was extended to the whole Mediterranean and that EAPC/PfP Partners, Mediterranean Dialogue countries and other selected nations will be asked to support it, including through their active participation.

BACKGROUND:

On 12 September 2001 NATO implemented Article 5 of the Washington Treaty following the 11 September attacks against the United States. Following US requests, NATO subsequently agreed to implement 8 specific measures to expand the options available in the campaign against terrorism. These measures included the deployment of elements of NATO's Standing Naval Forces to the Eastern Mediterranean in order to provide a NATO presence and demonstrate resolve.

The NATO Operation ACTIVE ENDEAVOUR formally began on 26 October 2001, when the activation order was issued. However, patrolling in the Eastern Mediterranean had already started on 6 October, when the Standing Naval Force Mediterranean was dispatched to conduct maritime presence operations in support of the international campaign against

terrorism.

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

- 06 Oct 01 SNFM departs Exercise Destined Glory 2001 for the Eastern Mediterranean - 26 Oct 01 Operation Active Endeavour begins - 04 Dec 01 Rescue operation - 04 Feb 03 Escorting in the Strait of Gibraltar begins - 29 Apr 03 Compliant Boardings commenced - 10 Dec 03 Strait of Gibraltar escorting suspended - 29 Jan 04 Strait of Gibraltar escorting resumed - 16 March 04 Operation expanded to the whole Mediterranean

SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

On 4 Dec 01, STANAVFORMED ships ALISEO, FORMION and ELROD were called to assist in the rescue of 84 civilians from a stricken oil rig. In high winds and heavy seas, the Italian helicopter of the ALISEO removed all 84 workers from the oil rig in 14 flights.

On 2 Jan 02, SNFL's Spanish frigate SPS EXTREMADURA and Netherlands oiler HNMLS AMSTERDAM, the UK naval vessel HMS BEAGLE and the Greek Coast Guard provided life-saving support to the passengers of a sinking ship in the Eastern Mediterranean off Crete. The BEAGLE's crew repaired the leaking hull and damaged propulsion to the AYDIN KAPTAN before the weather deteriorated and Greek helicopters began winching the children and women amongst the 254 refugees onboard and carried them to Crete and the AMSTERDAM. On 3 Jan 02, the AYDIN KAPTAN was towed by a Greek fishing vessel, under SNFL escort, to Greek territorial waters.

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