

EUNAVFOR Operation Atalanta: New Force Commander appointed

Today, **Rear Admiral Ignacio Villanueva Serrano** was appointed as new **force commander** for the EU naval **operation Atalanta**. His mandate will start on 17 March.

He will exercise command and control of all military forces in the Area of Operations during the 34th rotation, and will be responsible for the planning, orchestration and execution of tactical military activities.

Rear Admiral Villanueva Serrano, a Spanish national, will take command from Commodore José Vizinha Mirones. He previously held senior positions within the Spanish Maritime Forces (SPMAFOR), and was Commanding Officer of the Spanish Navy Air Wing. He also served at the headquarters of NATO's Allied Command Operations as capability requirements and force planning officer, and in Pristina, Kosovo, working as peace observer and liaison officer between the NATO and UN missions in Kosovo.

The decision on Rear Admiral Villanueva Serrano's appointment was adopted by the Council's Political and Security Committee.

EU NAVFOR Operation Atalanta, contributes to the **deterrence, prevention and repression** of acts of **piracy** and armed robbery off the **Somali coast**. The operation is part of the EU's comprehensive approach for a peaceful, stable and democratic Somalia.

The operation also **protects vessels** of the World Food Programme and other vulnerable shipping, monitors fishing activities off the coast of Somalia and supports other EU missions and programmes in the region.

The **EU's comprehensive approach to Somalia** comprises diplomatic efforts, development support, humanitarian aid as well as engagement in the field of rule of law and law enforcement. It includes three complementary missions under the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy: EU NAVFOR Operation Atalanta, EUCAP Somalia, enhancing Somalia's maritime civilian law enforcement capacity and EUTM Somalia, providing political and strategic level military advice to the Somali authorities and contributing to the development of the Somali National Army (SNA)'s own training capacity.