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Final

Factsheet

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NATO/WEU

Operation Sharp Guard

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The joint NATO-WEU Operation SHARP GUARD began on 15 June 1993 to replace the separate NATO and WEU operations MARITIME GUARD and SHARP FENCE; the operation was suspended on 19 June 1996 and terminated following a United Nations Security Council resolution adopted on 1 October 1996.

For more than three years NATO and WEU effectively enforced both economic sanctions and an arms embargo. This helped contain the conflict in the former Yugoslavia and create the conditions for the Peace Agreement for Bosnia and Herzegovina. During Sharp Guard no ships were reported as having broken the embargo. To achieve this result, during the period 22 November 1992 to 18 June 1996 about 74,000 ships were challenged, almost 6,000 were inspected at sea and more than 1400 were diverted and inspected in port.

Background :

Sharp Guard was initiated to conduct operations to monitor and enforce compliance with UN sanctions in accordance with UN Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR) (713, 757, 787, 820 and 943). Its maritime forces, under Combined Task Force 440, prevented all unauthorized shipping from entering the territorial waters of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) and all arms from entering the former Yugoslavia.

CTF 440 was formed with NATO forces, mainly the Standing Naval Force Mediterranean (STANAVFORMED) and the Standing Naval Force Atlantic (STANAVFORMED), together with the WEU Contingency Maritime Force. Organised in combined task groups, NATO and WEU ships conducted continuous patrolling in the southern Adriatic sea to enforce the embargoes. They established direct communication with masters of transiting vessels to determine the nature of their cargo, its origin and destinations. Vessels entering or leaving the territorial waters of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) were halted and inspected to verify compliance with UN Security Council resolutions or diverted to an approved port or anchorage. The same procedure was applied for ships enroute to other ports in Former Yugoslavia. Vessels not in compliance were escorted to the Italian territorial waters and turned over to national authorities.

On 1 May 1994, Yugoslav Navy ships attempted to interfere with Sharp Guard forces which were preventing an oil tanker from violating the maritime embargo. The tanker, the Maltese-registered Lido II, was eventually escorted to Italian territorial waters.

As a consequence of UNSC resolutions 1021 and 1022, the SHARP GUARD mission was eventually limited to heavy weapons and ammunition embargo enforcement. In particular, UNSC resolution 1022 suspended indefinitely, subject to certain provisions, the commercial embargo against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In application of UNSC resolution 1021 and of the provisions of the General Framework Agreement for Peace (GFAP) in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the embargo on small arms was terminated on 13 March 1994.

SHARP GUARD units continue to enforce the embargo on heavy weapons and their ammunitions, to include mines, military aircraft and helicopters and remained ready to resume, at short notice, full implementation of sanctions if the conditions set by the UNSC resolutions are not met.

The remaining weapons and military equipments embargo against the former Yugoslavia was in effect until the UN Security Council noted, on 18 June 96 that the conditions set out in the UNSC resolution 1021 had been met.

NATO and WEU forces remain prepared to resume enforcement operations if economic sanctions were reimposed in accordance with UN Security Council resolution 1022. The same resolution said that the economic embargo would terminate on the tenth day following the occurrence of the first free and fair elections required by the Peace Agreement, provided that the Bosnian Serb forces had withdrawn from, and had continued to respect, the zones of separation.

On 1 October 1996 the UN Security Council approved resolution 1074 and in a statement said that, satisfied with elections held in Bosnia and Herzegovina in line with Peace Agreement, the Security Council decided to immediately terminate all sanctions on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The resolution added also that the Council called upon all parties to comply strictly with their commitments under the Peace Agreement; furthermore, the Council decided to keep the situation under close review and to consider the imposition of additional measures if any party failed significantly to meet their obligations under the Agreement.

On 2 October 1996 NATO and WEU announced that, following the UN decision, Operation Sharp Guard was terminated, in accordance with the direction of the NATO and WEU Councils. The joint statement concluded that NATO and WEU consider that this operation, which was their first combined operation, served as a positive demonstration of the strengthening ties and intensifying cooperation between the two organizations.

Organization:

The overall operational control of Sharp Guard was delegated to Admiral Mario Angeli, Italian Navy, as Commander, Combined Task Force 440 (CCTF 440). He was assisted by Rear Admiral Gianfranco Coviello, Italian Navy, as Deputy CCTF 440. Admiral Angeli is the Commander of Allied Naval Forces Southern Europe. As CCTF 440, his staff has been complemented by a WEU staff element.

Surface ships operated within two operational combined task groups (CTG) at sea while conducting operations in the Adriatic sea. A third task group had responsibility for ships conducting training or port visits. Operational responsibilities rotated among the task group commanders. During the latest period of embargo enforcement there were two operational task groups, commanded by Commodore Frank Ropers, German Navy (COMSTANAVFORMED) and Rear Admiral Nicola Azzolini, Italian Navy (COMWEUCONMARFOR).

Maritime Patrol Aircraft (MPA) operated under operational control of CTF 440 through the Commander of Combined Task Force 431, Rear Admiral John R. Ryan, US Navy.

Nations Contributing Forces:

Nations contributing forces have been: Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, The Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States.

Participating Forces: (as of 18 June 1996)

Surface Ships:

FS La Fayette (F 710), frigate (France)
FS Commandant Blaison (F 793), frigate (France)
FGS Emden (F 210), frigate (Germany)
HS Themistokles (D 221), destroyer (Greece)
ITS Libeccio (F 572), frigate (Italy)
ITS Lupo (F 564), frigate (Italy)
HNLMS Karel Doorman (F 827), frigate (The Netherlands)
SPS Asturias (F 74), frigate (Spain)
SPS Reina Sofia (F 84), frigate (Spain)
TCG Kocatepe (D 354), destroyer (Turkey)
HMS Nottingham (D 91), destroyer (United Kingdom)
USS Samuel B. Roberts (FFG 58), frigate (United States)

Fighter Aircraft:

Various aircraft from allied forces operating in the area contributed to the defense of ships from attacks by surface ships.

Maritime Patrol Aircraft:

Continuous MPA support to the naval forces of CTF 440 was provided by assets from eight NATO nations: France (Atlantique), Germany (Atlantique), Italy (Atlantique), The Netherlands (P-3C), Portugal (P-3P), Spain (P-3B), UK (Nimrod), and the US (P-3C). The above aircraft operated from the airbases at Sigonella (Sicily) and Elmas (Sardinia), in Italy.

Airborne Early Warning:

Eight E-3A and two E-3D from NATO's Airborne Early Warning Force (NAEWF) supported Operation "Sharp Guard", as well as NATO Operation "Deny Flight". The E-3A aircraft operated from Geilenkirchen, Germany, Aviano (Italy), Trapani (Italy) and Action (Greece) and were flown by multi-national crews provided by 11 NATO nations. The E-3D aircraft from the UK's Number 8 Squadron flew from RAF Waddington (UK) as well as Aviano and Trapani. French E-3F aircraft participating under the auspices of the WEU operated from either Avord (France) or Trapani.

Statistics:

During the period 22 November 1992 to 18 June 1996, NATO and WEU forces have challenged, boarded or diverted to a port for inspection the following numbers of merchant vessels :

Challenged = 74,192

Boarded and inspected at sea = 5,951

Diverted and inspected in port = 1,480

These results have been achieved by:

Ship days spent at sea = 19,699

Maritime Patrol Aircraft sorties = 7,151

NATO and French Airborne Early Warning Aircraft sorties = 6,174

Note: The period 22 November 1992 to 15 June 1993 was under separate NATO and WEU operations: respectively Maritime Guard and Sharp Fence.

History:

In July, 1992, forces operating under NATO and WEU, working closely together, began monitoring compliance in the Adriatic Sea with the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council against the former Yugoslavia. The two separate operations were called respectively Maritime Monitor and Sharp Vigilance. On 22 November, 1992, both operations were amplified in scope to include the enforcement of relevant UN resolutions which included the commencement of boarding and search operations. The operations were then renamed Maritime Guard and Sharp Fence.

On 8 June 1993 the Councils of NATO and the WEU, at a joint session, reviewed the embargo operations and approved a combined concept of operations for the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 820, which strengthened the existing embargoes against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). This concept included a single command and control arrangement for the combined operation "SHARP GUARD" under the authority of the councils of both organizations.

After the UN Security Council strengthened the embargo against Serbia and Montenegro with resolution 820 in April 1993, no ship has been able to break the embargo and six ships have been caught while attempting to do so.

