

NATIONAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE ONGOING EU MILITARY OPERATIONS IN AFRICA

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Abstract: *The European Union’s military operations represent an essential vector in implementing the priorities of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy that was signed in 2007, as an official acknowledgement of the geographical, historical and cultural relations between the two continents. In its’ pursuing of a strengthened profile in the EU, Romania has been a constant contributor to such military initiatives. Therefore, in this paper we review the national contribution to the ongoing military operations conducted by the European Union in Africa, presenting and analysing relevant data regarding the deployment of Romanian troops in such faraway regions.*

Keywords: Africa, European Union, military operations

1. Introduction

Africa and Europe have been bound together by a long-lasting process of cooperation, but their partnership was institutionalised only in 2007, with the signing of the Africa-EU Strategy. One of the most important strategic priorities of the partnership concerns the promotion of peace and security, „as preconditions for political, economic and social development” [1]. In this regard, some of the grinding conflicts and ethnic tensions on the African continent have been ended or stabilised with the help of various EU and NATO military operations or with the help of other cooperation activities [2]. In Africa, the EU currently conducts one naval operation and three training missions. As Romania contributes to all these four military operations, in the following we present and analyse relevant data concerning the presence of Romanian troops in the African areas of operations.

2. Methodology

In writing this paper, we used as a scientific tool the analysis of social documents, a qualitative method described by Glenn Bowen in a revealing scientific article published previously [3].

3. National Contribution to Operation EU NAVFOR Atalanta

In December 2008 the EU launched Operation Atalanta, conducted in the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean, with the main purposes of countering piracy of the coast of Somalia, protecting ships belonging to the World Food Programme and monitoring fishing activities in the region [4].

Romania participated at Operation Atalanta between 1 October – 30 November 2012, by subscribing Frigate „Regele Ferdinand” – this being the first national contribution to a modern counter-piracy operation (conducted at 3.000 miles away from national waters), but also the first presence

of a Romanian military ship in the Indian Ocean and the Southern Hemisphere.

The Romanian warship had a crew of 203 members, and its on-board capabilities included an embarked fully operational Puma helicopter [5].

Although the lessons learned from NATO's operations Active Endeavour and Unified Protector were still fresh, the Romanian sailors actively trained during the pre-deployment phase, exercising procedures to identify and end naval piracy actions. The training procedures varied from combined ship-boarding teams-helicopter synchronised actions to firing exercises with individual and on-board weapons (including the Puma machinegun) and to providing immediate help to other vessels in distress [6].

Under the leadership of Commander Mihai Panait, the Romanian frigate departed from the Port of Constanța on 12 September and arrived on Djibouti on 3 October. Immediately afterwards, the frigate

commenced patrolling in the Gulf of Aden, along the internationally recommended transit corridor.

During the mission, the frigate conducted various counter-piracy actions, such as [7]: escort of a vessel from the World Food Programme between two ports; friendly approach missions, in order to gather intelligence from local fishermen, but also to promote to them the best management practices for protection against piracy; medical evacuation with the help of the Puma helicopter; training activities with Tanzanian sailors. Also, in order to conduct patrolling on a continuous basis, on several occasions the frigate was replenished at sea by various supply ships.

All in all, the frigate provided a meaningful contribution to Operations Atalanta (*Table 1*), and its added value to the mission has been acknowledged by the then EU NAVFOR Commander.

Table 1: Relevant Numbers Regarding the Added Value of Frigate „Regele Ferdinand” to Operation Atalanta [8]

60	days at sea
12.500	nautical miles
1.100	underway hours
113	flight hours for the Puma helicopter
9	suspects of piracy detained

On 14 December the Frigate „Regele Ferdinand” finally returned back home to the Port of Constanța, where an official ceremony was held in the honour of the crew. Since the end of this deployment, Romania has been constantly contributing with staff officers to the operation's Force Headquarters.

4. National Contribution to the Training Missions

Currently, the EU conducts training missions in three African countries: Central African Republic, Mali and Somalia. As a constant contributor to the EU's military operations, Romania subscribed troops to all three missions, although not as many as in the case of EU NAVFOR Atalanta (*Table 2*).

Table 2: Troops subscribed by Romania to the EU Training Missions in Africa [9]

No.	Training Mission	National Contribution
1	EUTM RCA (Central African Republic)	14
2	EUTM Mali	3
3	EUTM Somalia	3

According to the latest data presented in *Table 2*, the largest national contingent is deployed in the Central African Republic. Actually, Romania's contribution to EUTM

RCA is the fourth biggest national contribution in the host country, representing 8.48% of the total subscribed troops (*Figure 1*).

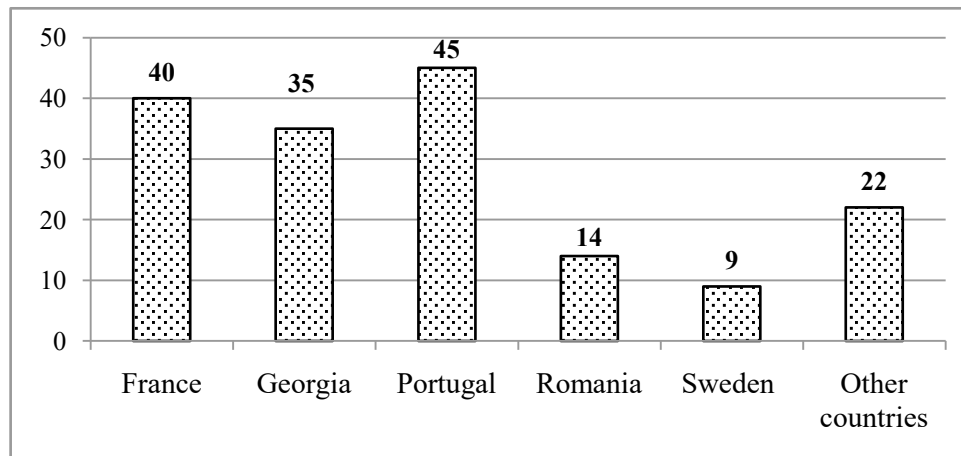


Figure 1: Top 5 Troops Contributors to EUTM RCA [10]

Referring again to *Table 2*, we can observe that Romania subscribes fewer troops to the other two training missions, representing 0,47% of the total troops in the case of EUTM Mali, respectively 1,67% in the case of EUTM Somalia. However, it should be noted that Romania additionally deploys in Mali, within UN's Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission (MINUSMA), the Helicopter Detachment „Carpathian Pumas” (consisting of 120 troops) plus 6 other military observers.

The tasks of the Romanian troops involved in these training missions are relatively similar, as they revolve around the implementation of the overall mandate [11]. For example, in the Central African Republic the purpose of EUTM RCA is to support the ongoing MINUSMA, but also to advise and council the national security institutions and train the Central African Armed Forces; then, the purpose of EUTM Mali is to strengthen the military capabilities of the Malian Armed Forces, thus contributing to the protection of the population and to the territorial integrity of

the country; finally, the purpose of EUTM Somalia is to provide advice and mentoring to the national security institutions, as well as to contribute to the capabilities development of the Somali Armed Forces.

5. Conclusions

In pursuing a strengthened profile in the European Union, Romania subscribes troops and capabilities for the ongoing military initiatives of the Union on the African continent.

At the training missions in the Central African Republic, Mali and Somalia, Romania participates with military training instructors and staff personnel that contribute to the overall purposes and mandates of the operations. Yet the most significant contribution was the one for the naval Operation Atalanta; apart from the increased number of subscribed troops, the national contribution also marked a couple of firsts for the Romanian Armed Forces: the first involvement in a modern counter-piracy operation, as well as the first

presence of a military ship in the Indian Ocean and the Southern Hemisphere.

Although deployed in the faraway African areas of operations, the experience and the

lessons learned by the national troops will definitely prove of high value for updating the best practices and procedures employed in the Romanian Armed Forces.

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