

## **PRESS RELEASE 17/2015**

**10 April 2014**

### **Seychelles Carries Out Maritime Search and Rescue Exercise Together with European Union**

On Friday, 10 April, the Seychelles Coast Guard, Air Force, Seychelles Civil Aviation Authority (SCAA), Seychelles Maritime Safety Administration (SMSA) carried out a comprehensive Search and Rescue Exercise in the Seychelles. The Maritime Police Patrol Unit (MPPU) as well as other authorities participated as observers. The exercise was conducted together with EUCAP Nestor and the EU Naval Force Somalia – Operation Atalanta represented by the Dutch Flagship Johan de Witt, on-board the Swedish Force Commander Rear Admiral Jonas Haggren.

The purpose of the exercise was to test contingency plans and procedures for Maritime Search and Rescue Operations. In the past year, two major exercises have already been carried out, a counter-piracy exercise and an oil spill exercise, all with the same purpose to practice the cooperation between the participating agencies in specific scenarios.

Today's exercise involved the reaction of the participating agencies to a scenario where an inter-island flight suddenly experiences engine failure and has to ditch in the coastal waters around Mahé. Reacting to this scenario SCG and the SCAA had to activate the contingency plan while SAF had to launch a surveillance aircraft to locate the ditched airplane and guide the other agencies towards the last known location of the civilian airplane and search for the people on-board.

To allow national agencies to validate practices and procedures of working together with international actors such as the EU Naval Force, the Flagship Johan De Witt also participated in the Search and Rescue operation while conducting routine patrol activities in the region. It is the second SAR exercise conducted together with the Seychellois maritime agencies and



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European partners (the first was in 2013) but first that exercise an air incident scenario and consequently involvement of the SCAA.

The complex exercise involved coordination of both sea and air assets together with civilian health service, emergency response services and direction of maritime and air traffic to ensure swift and safe rescue of the people on the downed aircraft. At this stage of the exercise, SCG deployed smaller boats to reach and start recovery of the 13 passengers and two crew members. For two passengers that were found seriously injured and in need of urgent transport to a medical facility, the EUNAVFOR Flagship Johan De Witt committed their helicopter to ensure swift transport. At the same time, SCG, SAF and EUNAVFOR continued to look for two missing passengers that had drifted off from the life raft; they were eventually located and brought back to safety. The exercise concluded with all passengers being picked up and transported to land for treatment.

Observing the exercise, EUCAP Nestor Coast Guard Expert in the Seychelles, Cdr. Giulio Piroddi, stated: *“This was a complex and difficult exercise involving numerous agencies, and it went very well. In this type of scenario it is essential that everyone acts in a coordinated manner, shares information and knows exactly what should be done. To this end the exercise demonstrated the improved maritime capability of SCG and the SAF; in this occasion implementing perfectly the National SAR Contingency Plan in a complex scenario.”*

At the end of the exercise, the EU Force Commander Rear Admiral Jonas Haggren, onboard the Flagship Johan De Witt, stated *“This type of capacity building exercises is a great way for us to strengthen the co-operation between EU Naval Force and the littoral states of the sea off the Horn of Africa and the Indian Ocean. As part of the EU’s comprehensive approach in Somalia, we are working closely together with our sister mission EUCAP Nestor in order to counter piracy and to strengthen maritime governance. I am very pleased that we can be a part of this exercise by using our assets to work together with the authorities of the Seychelles, especially since the aim is to strengthen the safety and security in the area for everyone involved.”*

Commenting on the exercise the SPDF Chief of Staff, Lieutenant Colonel Michael Rosette stated: *“Having at its disposal a number of maritime and air assets that are available around the clock, the SPDF have much to offer in terms of response capabilities to major incidents; such*



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*capabilities were clearly put to test through this exercise. This exercise provided the different local agencies with the opportunity to work together at national level and also coordinate with foreign partners, in this case EUNAVFOR. The initiative of the EUCAP NESTOR team to collaborate with the local agencies in planning and successfully executing this important exercise has been much appreciated."*

### **Background**

EUCAP Nestor is a civilian EU mission under the Common Security and Defense Policy which assists host countries in the Horn of Africa and Western Indian Ocean region (Somalia, Djibouti, Seychelles, Tanzania) in strengthening their capacity to ensure maritime security and in particular to fight piracy.

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