

## Shipping associations welcome EU Red Sea operation Aspides



**Shipping associations have welcomed the European Union's operation Aspides, a defensive maritime security operation to protect shipping in the Red Sea.**

Gary Howard | Feb 20, 2024

The Council of the EU announced that the defensive operation will have an initial one year duration and a mandate to protect commercial vessels against attacks at sea by providing situational awareness and accompanying ships in the region. In its announcement, the EU said it would cooperate with "like-minded international partners" but the creation of its own operation signals that the bloc was uncomfortable following the US-led Operation Prosperity Guardian.

The operation will have naval assets from Greece, France, Germany, and Italy, as well as one aerial asset. Headquartered in Greece, it will cover the Bab al-Mandab Strait and the Strait of Hormuz, the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, the Arabian Sea, and the Gulf of Oman.

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“With the launch of EUNAVFOR Aspides, the European Union is responding swiftly to the necessity to restore maritime security and freedom of navigation in a highly strategic maritime corridor,” said Josep Borrell, EU high representative for foreign affairs and security policy.

The World Shipping Council (WSC) expressed its gratitude to the EU Naval Force (EUNAVFOR) for the launch of Aspides, and expects the operation to play a key role in defending seafarers and commercial shipping in the region.

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“WSC strongly appreciates the commitment of the EU as evidenced by today’s decision to make an important contribution to maritime security alongside other international partners and in cooperation with EUNAVFOR Operation Atalanta,” it said. Atalanta is the bloc’s ongoing counter-piracy operation in

The association for container lines called for the reestablishment of safe passage for seafarers and trade in the Red Sea as soon as possible, urging countries and organisations to use all diplomatic and defensive means to protect seafarers and trade.

Secretary General of the European Community Shipowners Association took to X to voice his support for operation Aspides, calling it essential to addressing the risks to commercial shipping in the Red Sea.

Underling the ongoing threat in the region, US Central Command said on X that on February 18 two anti-ship ballistic missiles were launched at a UK-owned bulk carrier Rubymar and one hit the vessel. The ship has since been abandoned, and the Houthis have claimed the ship has sunk.

On the same day as the naval operation was announced, the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) and other shipping associations marked the three month anniversary of the seizing of Galaxy Leader and its crew, issuing a joint call for the immediate release of the ship's 25 crew. "It is abhorrent that seafarers were seized by military forces and that they have been kept from their families and loved ones for too long. All 25 crew members of the Galaxy Leader must be released now," the signatories said.

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