

Turkish frigate serving as flagship for NATO Operation Sea Guardian in Mediterranean



The Turkish frigate TCG Barbaros is serving as flagship for NATO's Operation Sea Guardian focused patrol. *NATO ALLIED MARITIME COMMAND*

MEDITERRANEAN SEA – NATO is continuing its Operation Sea Guardian with its first focused patrol for 2022.

Turkish frigate TCG Barbaros is currently deployed to the Eastern Mediterranean Sea and is serving as flagship for NATO's current OSG focused patrol.

According to a statement from NATO Allied Maritime Command, Barbaros's three-week deployment is the first of six Operation Sea Guardian-focused operations scheduled this year and will run until Feb. 12, 2022.

"This focused patrol incorporates maritime patrol aircraft from Greece, Poland and Turkey in addition to submarines from Greece and Turkey in support of the flagship," the statement said. "Simultaneously, Standing NATO Maritime Group 2 comprised of the flagship ITS Margottini, ESPS Blas de Lezo and TCG Goksu will be deployed in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, contributing NATO's maritime situational awareness efforts."

According to MARCOM, Operation Sea Guardian is a non-Article 5, "collaborative, year-round maritime security operation designed to maintain maritime situational awareness, deter and counter terrorism activity and build capacity and interoperability among NATO Allies and partners."

Aimed at working with Mediterranean stakeholders and partners, the operation has been conducting focused patrols at specific areas of interest in the Mediterranean Sea. Operation patrols commenced in 2016 to "maintain an accurate picture of the maritime environment and contribute to the safety and security in the region."

NATO's website states that "Operation Sea Guardian is a flexible operation that can potentially cover the full range of NATO's maritime security operation tasks. At present, it is operating in the Mediterranean and is conducting three MSO tasks: maritime security capacity building and support to maritime situational awareness and to maritime counter-terrorism."

As needed, Operation Sea Guardian can also be directed to uphold freedom of navigation, conduct maritime interdiction, fight the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and protect critical infrastructure.

"I cannot think of a better example that speaks to the relevance of inter-agency cooperation than Operation Sea Guardian," said Allied MARCOM's commander, Royal Navy Vice

Adm. Keith Blount, speaking at the NATO Maritime Security Conference last year at Souda Bay, Crete. "Our obligation to ensure maritime security in the Mediterranean requires a multitude of actions, in collaboration with our allies and partners, and represents the full spectrum of capabilities that we possess."