

BLACK SEA HARMONY - ATTITUDES AND PERSPECTIVES

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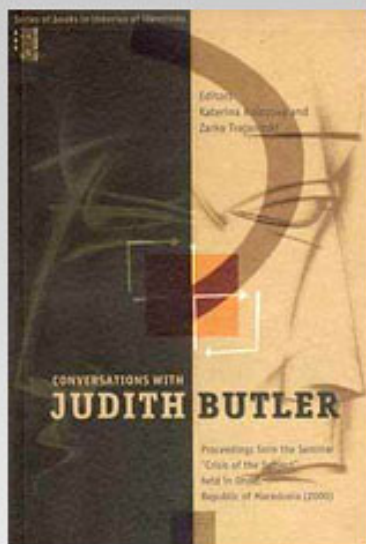
by Ion CUSTURĂ; Dorin DĂNILĂ

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BLACK SEA HARMONY - ATTITUDES AND PERSPECTIVES*

*Dorin DĂNILĂ,
Ion CUSTURĂ, PhD*

As a neighbouring Black Sea country, Romania has both a national direct interest to protect and secure the harbours and maritime areas under its jurisdiction and an additional responsibility towards its allies from NATO and EU, derived from its double quality, a NATO and EU member state.

Keywords: security, the Black Sea, Black Sea Harmony.

1. General framework

Black Sea security represents an essential part of the entire Black Sea region. Main risks and threats which can be identified within maritime domain are asymmetric. The Black Sea and the region might pose as traffic zones for drugs, weapons, dangerous materials and human beings coming mainly from Central Asia, Afghanistan and non-state enclaves of the region, heading to Western Europe. The illegal maritime traffic from the Black Sea basin entering Europe especially through Turkish and Ukrainian harbours has an increasing tendency. The rise of fundamentalist movements, social and economic problems, and ethnic conflicts increase the risk of terrorist activities in this part of the world.

Even the most part of this kind of risks cross the region on land routes, the last statistics show more frequent use of maritime and riparian means of transportation under different state flags (from the small fishing boats up to big cargo ships) and also under independent sailors shipping services and companies for illegal traffic of drugs and conventional weapons but also of sensitive materials and products which can be used for both, military and civilian purposes.

At the same time, Turkish statistics highlight an accelerated increase of maritime traffic, especially oil tankers, through Turkish straits and across Black Sea, which amplifies asymmetric risks and shipping security. Transport of oil products is mainly carried out by Russian ships, 70% of this

being designated to European countries.

Along with all these issues we can add the increased interest of NATO and EU organizations to provide secure boundaries (including maritime ones) in order to stop illicit traffic of small and light weapons, drugs, sensitive materials and products which can be used for both, military and civilian purposes or human beings traffic and illegal immigration, which pose as predominant factors of nonconventional risks addressed to Euro-Atlantic area security, nourishing and supporting terrorist activities. In this context, an increased protection of maritime routes, ports and Romanian maritime interest areas is requested.

As a neighbouring Black Sea country, Romania has both a national direct interest to protect and secure the harbours and maritime areas under its jurisdiction and an additional responsibility towards its allies from NATO and EU, derived from its double quality, a NATO and EU member state. Romania has assumed the contribution to collective defence Operation „Active Endeavour” carried out in the Med Sea aiming to counter the use of maritime route for terrorist activities or other activities supporting terrorism. Black Sea security contributes also to downsizing the asymmetric risks in the Mediterranean Sea basin.

1.1. History and present status of “Black Sea Harmony Operation” (BSHO)

After joining NATO as full member of the organization, Romania has supported the idea of „Active Endeavour Operation” (AEO) extension in the Black Sea area, as a solution to increase the security in this basin. This objective was considered as an important part of strategic approach of opening and internationalization of the Black Sea through the involvement of major actors out of area, interested in its security architecture.

Continuing the strategy of Montreux Convention protection, namely control of the Turkish straits, Turkey launched in March 2004



the national maritime security operation „Black Sea Harmony”, which, from the very beginning, has initiated an information exchange with NATO about suspect vessels in the Black Sea, and an operational extension among the riparian countries on a bilateral basis with each state. Up to now, there are only three bilateral memoranda of understanding between Turkey and Russian Federation (2007), Turkey and Ukraine (2008), and Turkey and Romania (2009).

1.2. The Romanian Naval Forces' participation in BSHO has the following advantages:

- a) securing the Romanian maritime areas of interest (territorial waters, contiguous zone, exclusive economic zone) as part of Eastern maritime border of NATO and EU;
- b) increased Romanian capabilities against maritime terrorist and asymmetric threats;
- c) consolidation of a regional initiative coordinated by a NATO member state, connected with a NATO similar operation, which can emphasize the NATO footprint in the region, maintaining national actions' authority;
- d) engaging and not isolating the Russian Federation in the regional maritime security efforts, without a veto right on the initiative's development;
- e) the development of cooperation with NATO and non-riparian allies in the Black Sea's security field (considering EU and other international relevant bodies' cooperation);
- f) the completion of NATO picture about the Black Sea's security in connection with the Mediterranean Sea Picture;
- g) configuring a profile and a concept regarding Romania's capacity, capability and role in consolidating the Black Sea's security.

2. The Romanian Naval Forces' contribution to BSHO

The Romanian Naval Forces can contribute to BSHO with maritime ships, Littoral Surveillance System and even with river ships. Among naval current forces which might be used in this operation we can mention frigates, corvettes, maritime minesweepers and logistic ships (281, 283) and a part of the river ships. Considering the mission essential task list, only the frigates can fully answer the requirements, corvettes, maritime

minesweepers, logistic ships (281, 283) and a part of the river ships have some limitations related to:

- a) real time data links for maritime picture compilation;
- b) crypto communications for C2 and information exchange;
- c) standard equipment for boarding teams;
- d) proper boats (RHIB) for boarding teams to conduct compliant boardings;

With the limitations indicated above, ships can carry out following tasks;

- a) surveillance from fixed positions or patrolling;
- b) visual identification and hailing/interrogation of merchant/ civilian ships;
- c) data reports about contacts/ targets using existent communication equipment;
- d) compliant boarding (frigates, corvettes and monitors) with the civilian ship's commander approval.

3. Other participants

In order to achieve the recognized maritime picture and successful task accomplishment, besides the Naval Forces, there is a need to engage other national governmental institutions and agencies based on special agreements, such as:

- a) surveillance and reconnaissance aviation (fixed wings, rotary wings) and Air Force Operational Command;
- b) structures in charge with the national border regime implementation (Ministry of Administration and Interior/with forces and means from the Naval Border Police);
- c) naval/ maritime civilian agencies responsible for monitoring naval picture and traffic safety (Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure/ Romanian Naval Authority and Constanta Harbours/ Ports Administration);
- d) national intelligence agencies;
- e) national custom authorities.

4. Operation's aim and tasks

Aim: prevent, deter and disrupt terrorist threat, illicit traffic of weapons of mass destruction, their delivery means and their associated materials, and terrorism supporting activities.

Tasks: 1. military ships presence on civilian traffic routes; 2. active surveillance and



reconnaissance actions; 3. shadowing contacts of interest/ suspect vessels; 4. compliant boarding.

Actions for task accomplishment:

a) exchange of information with NATO and Turkey about the traffic in the Black Sea or in Romanian harbours of ships suspect of terrorist activities or illicit activities related to it (Contact of Interest/ COI, or Vessels of Collection Interest/ VOICI);

b) naval units presence and active surveillance on main sea lines of communication and adjacent air space within own maritime area of responsibility, in accordance with the domestic and international law provisions;

c) shadowing, pursuing and control of suspect vessels, in accordance with the Romanian legislation;

d) interrogation of ships within own area of responsibility or interest;

e) coordination and cooperation between Romanian and Turkish naval forces under

BSHO aegis, including actions of Coast Guard/ Border Police and Naval Authorities, in accordance with the national legislation in force and with obligations assumed by each country in organizations and treaties they are part of.

5. Area of responsibility (AOR)

The Romanian BSHO AOR will be most probably stretching between Vama Veche and Cardon parallel lines of latitude in the south and north, including territorial waters, contiguous zone and exclusive economic zone (delineated very early this year with Ukraine, but not delineated with Bulgaria yet), Danube Delta and maritime part of the Danube.

Romanian territorial waters include maritime area adjacent to Romanian littoral or internal waters until 12 miles distance from the littoral base line, their limits representing practically the maritime borders of the country. Within this area the responsible authority is mainly Border Police, Naval Forces supporting them, as requested.

The contiguous zone is represented by the portion of the sea adjacent to the territorial waters expanding till 24 miles from the littoral baseline. In this area Romania impose the control for prevention and repealing of breaking its customs, fiscal, sanitation and border legislation.

Exclusive economic zone is the part of the sea adjacent to the Romanian littoral, beyond the territorial waters, where the country has sovereign rights and jurisdiction over all natural resources form water and sea bed, including their exploration, exploitation, and environmental protection and preservation. Its maximum limit might extend till 200 nautical miles from the littoral baseline, but in the Black Sea, due to its dimensions, extension of the exclusive economic zone is established through agreements between the neighbouring countries, as it is stated in the United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea, Montego Bay, 1982 ratified by Romania through Law number 110 from 1996.

6. Specific risk factors impacting the Naval Forces' activities

a) revival of unsolved „frozen conflicts” (Georgia, Moldova);

b) Black Sea area offers a lot of opportunities as a transit zone for energetic resources from Central Asia area to Europe, but at the same time it is a source of risk factors due to internal instability of some states in the region and due to conflicts of interest not only of the regional states, but also of some states out of the region;

c) Russian Federation opposition to NATO extension toward east;

d) support of terrorism not only by the separatist terrorist groups, but also by the governmental structures in some states;

e) organized crime might contribute significantly to regional instability. There are many examples of disputes between different criminal groups which collaterally involved innocent people or representatives of other states governmental agencies or international agencies and organizations, in this case causing potential sources of crises;

f) increased potential for weapons of mass destruction proliferation;

g) piracy and armed robbery;

h) illegal immigration and traffic of human beings;

i) containerized transport development and lack/ scarce of appropriate scanning devices for such a huge volume of goods in a short time, might increase the possibility of materials which can be used in terrorist attacks.



7. Interest objectives in the Naval Forces' area of responsibility

These objectives are important targets which can be included in critical infrastructure or social-economic categories such as:

- a) maritime drilling and/ or extraction platforms;
- b) maritime and river harbours;
- c) fishing areas;
- d) Danube mouths, especially Sulina Branch;
- e) maritime commercial traffic in coastal areas;
- f) maritime roads, traffic separation zones and navigation aids.

8. BSHO Concept of operations

Romanian Naval Forces structures under Naval Operational Command operational control carry out surveillance and monitoring naval traffic, identification, shadowing/ pursuing and compliant boarding of suspect ships in their AOR as it follows:

- a) permanent radar surveillance within radar discovery limits, timely reporting data to Naval Operational Command;
- b) maritime surveillance (radar and visual) using patrolling ships during increased suspect vessels activities in certain/ more probable maritime shipping sectors;
- c) river surveillance (radar and visual) using maritime and river ships at Danube mouths and on maritime part of the Danube;
- d) identification of contacts discovered by littoral and ships surveillance means using ships and/ or naval helicopters approaching targets at visual distance, which use radio or voice interrogation standard procedures about ships name, main characteristics call sign, cargo and destination;
- e) visits/ inspections on board to check the cargo and crew are carried out by the ships boarding team in presence of a Border Police officer, in case of an compliant boarding;
- f) results of visits/ inspections on board are reported to Naval Operational Command which forward them to appropriate Romanian authorities involved in BSHO, then to BSHO Primary Coordination Centre in Ereğli/ Turkey.

Ships participating in BSHO might be in one of the following situations:

- a) Ships performing duty Navy guard tasks (intervention at sea and/or on the river)
- b) Ships specially assigned for BSHO intervention (nominated and scheduled to intervene on call for tasks related to this operation in certain periods of time).

Each ship might take action in BSHO from following positions:

- a) permanent deployment places/ home ports, on call, based on information and orders received from Naval Operational Command (NOC), in an appropriate time span which allows an effective intervention (in case of routine and low/ reduced risk degree situations);

- b) waiting positions at sea, at Danube mouths, on the river, on call, based on information and orders received from NOC (medium risk degree situations);

- c) patrolling within maritime AOR, based on mutual exchange of information between the ships and NOC (high risk degree situations and during scheduled activities at sea);

- d) execution of Navy Guard Ship duty in the areas of interest (very high risk degree situations).

Merchant and fishing vessels reconnaissance and identification might be realised using lists provided by NATO or national designated authorities.

Interrogation and pursuing/ shadowing of suspect vessels will be done using NATO procedures. Visits and inspections on board will be carried out in close cooperation with Border Police personnel and ships.

In this operation might be involved other structures, as follows:

- a) Air Force Operational Command conducting air surveillance and Reconnaissance;

- b) Romanian Naval Authority providing information about in traffic merchant and fishing vessels at sea and on the river, and in ports ships (Mangalia, Constanta, Midia, Sulina, Tulcea, Galati and Braila);

- c) Border Police carrying out specific actions within territorial and internal waters;

- d) National intelligence agencies which provides data about ships suspected of terrorist activities or illegal activities supporting terrorism;

- e) Customs authority which can provide data about potential suspect cargoes.



9. The operation's conduct

Command and Control of Romanian forces involved in BSHO is conducted by the Naval Operational Command, located in Constanta. Decision regarding interrogation, control/inspection on board suspect vessels, and applicable Rules of Engagement (ROE) is made by the appropriate Romanian military authorities. Actually, each nation participating in BSHO maintains the Command and Control of their naval assets designated to this operation.

Communications between national BSHO Coordination Centres and Principal Coordination Centre in Eregli will be maintained through telephone, internet and fax secured means.

Communications between forces participating in BSHO (including air assets) will use VHF, UHF and HF radio means (English language and special codes issued for this operation), „PC to PC” communications, visual communications (flag signals and/ or signalling lights).

A Romanian naval forces liaison officer will act in PCC BSHO/ Eregli/ Turkey as national point of contact (POC) and will be invested with the authority of coordination maritime activities between Romanian and Turkish Naval Forces. Turkish part will have a similar POC in Constanta/ Romania, place to be identified.

10. Conclusions

First steps for initiation of this operation, already started on 31 March 2009 when the Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the two Chiefs of Romanian and Turkish Naval Forces, might consist in issuing of common action plans between participating institutions and agencies and in exchanging appropriate information.

In the future, the Romanian Naval Forces participation in BSHO might consist in a periodic presence of 1 or 2 ships in maritime/ river areas of interest monitoring and surveying ships traffic. This presence of Naval Forces might contribute to:

- a) an increased contribution and influence of Romania in the Black Sea maritime security;
- b) consolidation of Romanian response capabilities to maritime asymmetric threats;
- c) securing national maritime interest and jurisdiction areas as part of Eastern border of NATO and UE;
- d) completion of NATO Black Sea maritime recognized picture related to that of the Mediterranean Sea security picture.

** The paper has been presented during the international seminar on “Strategies for cooperation within the Black Sea Area” organised by the Centre for Defence and Security Strategic Studies from the National Defence University “Carol I” on May, 27th, 2009.*

Rear admiral Dorin DĂNILĂ (dorin.danila@navy.ro) is the Chief of the Romanian Naval Forces Staff.

Commander Ion CUSTURĂ, PhD (ion.custura@navy.ro), is an officer within the Romanian Naval Forces Staff.