

Multidimensional responses to complex emergencies in the Atlantic

I would like to thank the invitation of the Portuguese defence ministry for this opportunity to participate in this second Atlantic Centre seminar. It is a pleasure to be here. Our contribution to this first section of work will focus on the response in the area of maritime security that an archipelagic country like Cape Verde, in the fight against the pandemic COVID-19 and the lessons learned.

Cape Verde is undoubtedly a maritime nation, it is a small archipelagic country with a land surface of 4,033 square kilometers, it gains dimension through its geographical position and the vast maritime space that it has, about 800,000 square kilometers. Naturally, the maritime economy plays a crucial role in its economy, since most products for the consumption of the population are transported by sea.

The maritime economy in this archipelago is based on three main economic activities: tourism, maritime transport and fishing or fishing industry.

So, it's easy to guest, the role of a Coast Guard or a Navy in an archipelagic country that depends a lot on the maritime economy, had and have to be paramount.

The emergency situation we are experiencing, the COVID 19 pandemic, has forced the implementation of several exceptional measures, with a view to achieving the first priority in combating the pandemic - protecting people.

We adopted rigorous self-protection behaviors, which allowed us to continue fulfilling our mission, while responding to the countless tasks that we were called upon to do.

We focused on ensuring the availability and readiness of the means, with priority in maritime interdiction operations (- disembarkation and embarkation, coming ashore or boarding, for passengers or crew, international and fishing vessels; -inter-island maritime connections for passenger transport and berthing or docking of cruise ships, recreational ships and sailboats, from abroad, except in exceptional situations); and in the logistical support to health services, in the transport of medical material and medical samples for COVID 19 tests, between the islands, participating decisively in the contribution of the Cape Verde Armed Forces to the national effort to combat the pandemic. We have increased our missions and the number of hours of navigation of our ships has doubled compared to previous years.

None of this could be accomplished if the interagency task force created for that purpose had not worked.

For the first time at the same table, agencies and institutions were seated under the command of the Coast Guard, in an effort to effectively control our waters. The maritime police, as well as some civilians, vessels, were under tactical command of the Coast Guard. The maritime assets were not enough to control a wide area, but at least together, we solved some difficult situations. There were 7 agencies that since March

18, 2020, working together. The strategy was to carry out joint patrols. Putting all assets available from coast guard, Maritime Police and civilians, a very large sharing and crossing of information between agencies, and we involve non-governmental organizations and riverside communities to put all available means so that we can fulfill our mission.

The results are visible: 110 missions of COVID 19 samples were transported for testing, 345 inspections of vessels, 56 of which were found in illegal situations, 45 MEDEVAC operations.

Despite the victories achieved with an interagency approach, many problems have come to surface. Institutional weaknesses in the maritime safety sector persist. These weaknesses are related to the multiplicity of institutions with formal responsibilities in this area and a certain disorganization of the sector, due to the absence of a well-defined integrative framework. A considerable part of the maritime safety activity is closely linked to the exercise of the maritime authority whose competence is spread across various bodies, but this authority is not globally harmonized. State authority at sea is exercised in a disaggregated and departmentally unified manner, which induces direct impacts on the effectiveness of the model that brings together figures and organs from different somewhat disconnected systems, constituting in conceptual and doctrinal terms an obstacle to its efficient and effective operation.

Institutional reform will need to be carried out by the maritime safety bodies; The National Strategy for State Action at Sea must be put into practice urgently. And we should consider performing inter-agency exercises very often. In this field very important victories have been achieved thanks to the international exercises that are performed regularly like OBANGAME EXPRESS and GRAND NEMO.

In this pandemic struggle, strong international cooperation was necessary, for many poor countries like Cape Verde, several donations in health materials were made by friendly countries, which we thank immensely. But with regard to international military cooperation, there have been very few initiatives in this area. We think that the military could have a word in this field, transporting health supplies, conducting COVID-19 tests or even helping the host country with the necessary medical evacuations are examples of the things we can do.

With the economic recession scenarios that are expected in the near future, the maritime security forces will also be extremely affected, with regard to their maintenance operating budgets, also in their fleet renewal programs. Despite the decrease in budgets, maritime security forces are going to be called on to other missions that we expect to be part of the worldwide reinforcement of medical and humanitarian missions. Crews must prepare to protect from COVID-19. Boarding teams will move to medical protection equipment as well as military protection equipment. Disinfection missions will increase. Maritime security forces as a way to mitigate the lack of funds for their operations should reinforce interagency and cooperative security operations by increasing them.

Collaboration is the key.

Thank you very much.