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## **EU Council: ASPIDES operation launched in the Red Sea “to safeguard the EU’s commercial interests”. “Defensive” mandate**

The defensive maritime security operation has been launched to “restore and safeguard freedom of navigation in the Red Sea and the Gulf”. The EUNAVFOR ASPIDES Operation announced by the Council of the European Union today will “play a key role in safeguarding commercial and security interests, for the sake of the EU and the wider international community”, said the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell. Since October 2023, numerous Houthi attacks have targeted international commercial vessels: ASPIDES, within its defensive mandate, will provide information on the maritime situation, accompany ships and protect them from possible attacks along the main sea lines of communication in the Bab al-Mandab Strait and the Strait of Hormuz, as well as international waters in the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, the Arabian Sea, the Gulf of Oman, and the Gulf. The Operation Commander will be Commodore Vasilios Gripparis, and the Force Commander will be Rear Admiral Stefano Costantino. The Operation headquarters will be based in Larissa, Greece.

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