



Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population
Commission des migrations, des réfugiés et de la population

Strasbourg, 26 October 2011

Dear Secretary of State,

As you may know, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has mandated its Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population to inquire into the circumstances around a tragic incident in the Mediterranean Sea in March / April earlier this year that led to the death of 63 boat people after their appeals for rescue were allegedly ignored. The Committee is thus undertaking an investigation of this incident, making contact with national authorities, NATO and other parties who may be able to provide clarity on the events in question. I attach for your convenience the motion of the Parliamentary Assembly which provides the mandate for the investigation and the report which is to be prepared.

The Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population appointed me as rapporteur to prepare the report on these allegations.

On 6 and 7 September, I was able to carry out interviews with several of the survivors of this incident, as well as meet with representatives of the *Comandante Generale del Corpo delle Capitanerie di Porto* in Rome (Italy). During the latter meeting, I was informed that on 27 March 2011, the *Comandante Generale del Corpo delle Capitanerie di Porto* received a rescue call concerning the boat in question. At the request of the Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre Rome (M.R.C.C. Roma), the location of the boat was determined by the Satellite provider, Thuraya, based on the last call made from a cellular phone aboard the boat. The M.R.C.C. Roma consequently sent, on 27 March 2011, a number of rescue calls to all ships and vessels, commercial and military, in the area or transiting through the area. The message sent included the coordinates of the boat and mentioned that it was "*probably in difficulty*".

I was informed that this message was repeated every 4 hours between 27 March and 7 April 2011. It is my understanding that all ships, commercial and military, are equipped to receive these calls.

According to the monitoring systems AISE and LRIT, used at the Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre Rome (M.R.C.C. Roma), no commercial ships transited close to the boat in distress. These monitoring systems, however, do not show the presence of military vessels.

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The Rt Hon Philip HAMMOND MP
Secretary of State for Defence of the United Kingdom

Given the fact that the boat in distress was located in the Libyan SAR, a war zone, it is likely that military vessels could well have been in the vicinity as alleged by the survivors of the incident.

For this reason, as Rapporteur on this issue, I would be most grateful if you could provide me with any relevant information you or your authorities may have relating to the incident and the role of any British military vessels. In addition I would be grateful if you could provide relevant information concerning the precise positions of all British military vessels, be they under national or NATO command, present in the Mediterranean Sea between 27 March and 10 April 2011. Of particular interest is the area around LAT 33°58.2'N – LONG 012°55.8'E in a 30 nautical miles radius on the dates 27 to 29 March 2011, as well as the area around LAT 33.18 N / LONG 13.84 E in a 30 nautical miles radius on the dates between 3 to 6 April 2011.

I understand the sensitivity of providing military information, but I hope your authorities will be able to provide me with full information on this matter.

I would like to thank you in advance for considering this request and I naturally remain at your disposal for any further information.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tineke Strik', written over a horizontal line.

Tineke Strik
Rapporteur