

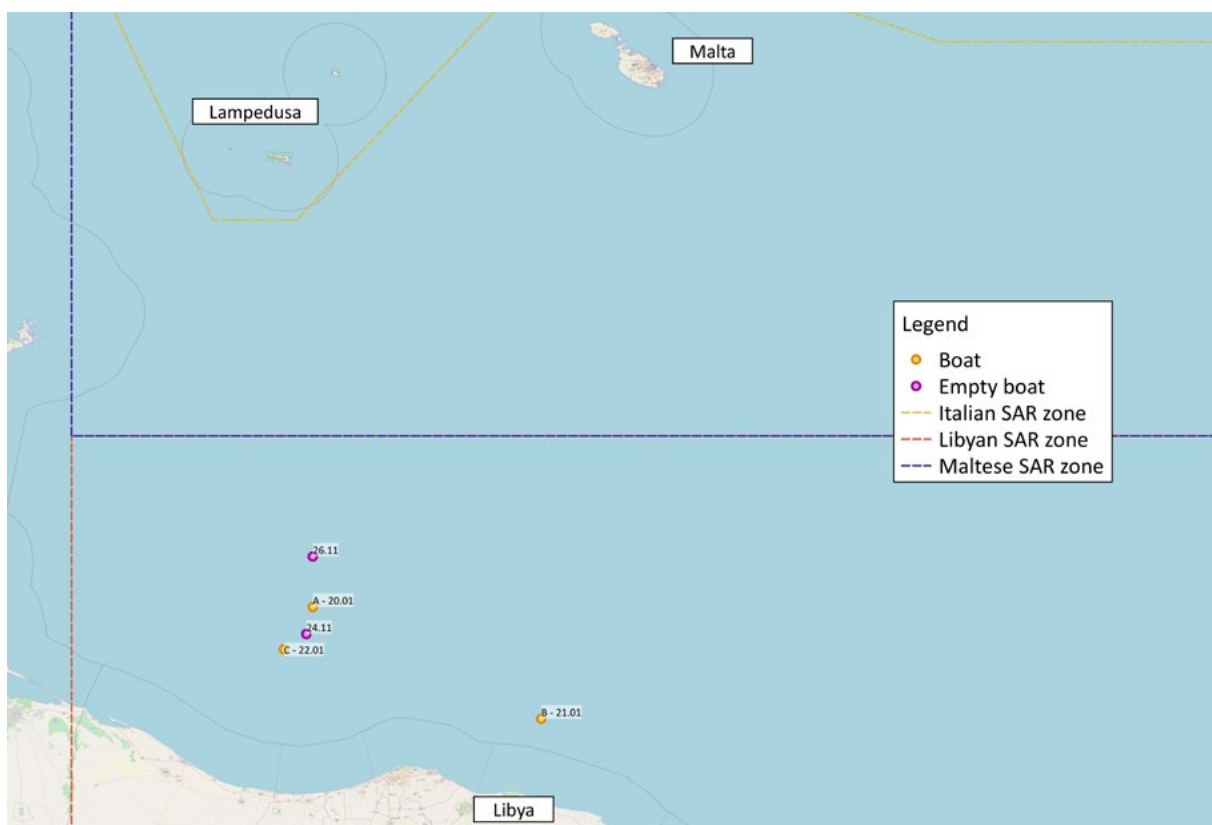
## Airborne Monthly Factsheet November 2020 - January 2021

This factsheet presents a summary of distress cases witnessed by *Sea-Watch's* Airborne crew from the aircraft *Moonbird*<sup>1</sup>. From November 2020 to January 2021, primarily due to bad weather in the Central Mediterranean Sea, we flew only **16 missions** with a total flight time of **73 hours and 22 minutes**. We spotted around 165 persons in distress and 2 empty boats.

<sup>1</sup> Since 2017, together with the Swiss NGO *Humanitarian Pilots Initiative*, *Sea-Watch* monitors the Central Mediterranean with the airplanes *Moonbird* and, recently, *Seabird*.

<sup>2</sup> These numbers are based upon the estimations of *Moonbird's* crew, as well as numbers which the initiative *Watch The Med - Alarm Phone*, the UNHCR and IOM have provided to us.

### 1. Overview of Distress Cases and Empty Boats Spotted



#### Libyan Search-and-Rescue (SAR) zone

- 3 distress cases were intercepted by the so-called *Libyan Coast Guard* and pulled back to Libya
- Estimated<sup>2</sup> number of persons in distress: 165



## 2. Details and Outcome of the Distress Cases

20.01.2021, distress case A, 48 persons: **interception by the so-called *Libyan Coast Guard* and pullback to Libya.** The initiative *Watch The Med - Alarm Phone* was called by the people on board and alerted authorities. The civilian aircraft *Colibri 2* then spotted the people in the Libyan Search-and-Rescue (SAR) zone, and the NGO vessel *Ocean Viking* began heading to the boat. *Moonbird's* crew spotted the people being intercepted by the so-called *Libyan Coast Guard* patrol boat *Fezzan*. The people were pulled back to Libya.

20.01.2021, **unresponsiveness of the Libyan authorities regarding a shipwreck and people in distress.** According to reports provided to the initiative *Watch The Med - Alarm Phone* and later confirmed by the IOM and UNHCR, a boat with around 53 persons capsized on 19.01. where only 10 persons survived. When *Moonbird's* ground crew attempted to call the Libyan authorities 16 times that day to request more information and offer support in looking for the missing persons, they were unreachable. In 2 cases, an exchange was not possible due to a lack of English. For 1 number the line was occupied, and in 4 other cases the call ended automatically, the phone was switched off or one person immediately hung up. In 9 cases, nobody answered.

21.01.2021, distress case B, 36 persons: **interception by the so-called *Libyan Coast Guard* and pullback to Libya, despite an NGO vessel present in the Central Mediterranean.** The initiative *Watch The Med - Alarm Phone* was called by the people on board and alerted the authorities. *Moonbird's* crew later spotted the interception of the people by the so-called *Libyan Coast Guard* patrol boat *Ubari*, in the Libyan SAR zone. The people were pulled back to Libya.

22.01.2021, distress case C, 81 persons: **interception by the so-called *Libyan Coast Guard*, likely under *Frontex* supervision.** The initiative *Watch The Med - Alarm Phone* was called by the people on board and alerted the authorities. The civilian aircraft *Colibri 2* then spotted the people in distress in the Libyan SAR zone. Meanwhile, *Moonbird's* ground crew observed the track of *Frontex* aircraft *Osprey3*, which orbited above the persons and then left the



scene, first flying towards Tripoli and then back again to the people in distress. We assume that the *Frontex* aircraft was likely guiding the so-called *Libyan Coast Guard* to the distress case. In total, according to the observations of *Moonbird's* ground crew, *Osprey3* orbited for more than 40 minutes above the persons in distress. By the time *Moonbird's* aircrew spotted the people in the Libyan SAR zone, *Osprey3* had already left the scene and was heading back to its home base. The so-called *Libyan Coast Guard* patrol boat *Fezzan* was then only 1 nautical mile (nm)<sup>3</sup> away. *Moonbird's* crew observed *Fezzan* intercepting and pulling the people back to Libya.

<sup>3</sup> "Nautical Miles" is the unit of measurement used at sea. 1 nautical mile is equal to 1.852 kilometers.

On 24. and 26.11.2020, *Moonbird's* crew **spotted 2 empty boats adrift in the Libyan SAR zone**, which could not be matched with any known cases.

## These missions highlight once again:

- the deadly consequences of European migration and border policies
- the systematic non-assistance of European Member States and the delegation of rescue operations to the so-called *Libyan Coast Guard*
- the participation of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency *Frontex* in the interceptions and pullbacks undertaken by the so-called *Libyan Coast Guard*
- the need for NGO vessels in the Central Mediterranean in order to uphold the law and save human lives