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Guardia di Finanza and SELEX Galileo celebrate 10 years of success with the ATOS system

The Guardia di Finanza Air-Naval Operational Command based in Pratica di Mare and SELEX Galileo, a Finmeccanica company, are celebrating ten years of operations of the ATOS aerial surveillance system on board ATR 42 MP aircraft produced by Alenia Aeronautica, currently used by the Maritime Exploration Squadron (GEA).

The Maritime Exploration Squadron, the Guardia di Finanza's airborne division, uses fixed-wing aircraft to ensure the entire Mediterranean basin's coverage in the achievement of EU maritime borders protection. It is an effective tool that has enabled the so-called Yellow Flames to execute successful operations beyond the borders of Italy and the European Union, on its own initiative and on request, and in collaboration with similar air-sea patrol services from other Member States. Its exceptional achievements in struggling against drug trafficking, which it also conducts over the Atlantic, have helped increase the international prestige of the Guardia di Finanza's Airborne Division.

In particular, it has participated in significant operations in collaboration with the Maritime Analysis Operations Centre – Narcotics (MAOC-(N)) in Lisbon and the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) in Brussels. Thanks in part to the ATOS airborne surveillance system the Squadron has been able to seize 7,286 kg of cocaine, 11,631 kg of hashish and 316 kg of marijuana, as well as capturing 17 boats and arresting 36 people.

Of particular importance is the intensive activity conducted to prevent illegal immigration phenomenon, assisting the tactical naval aviation unit based on the island of Lampedusa. This unit is involved in containing flows of migrants from North Africa, which have increased dramatically following serious humanitarian disasters and political crises in those countries. In this delicate operating environment, the perfect synergy between operator, vehicle and ATOS system has made it possible to locate and rescue around 20,000 men, women and children and to arrest 42 people traffickers.

Over the past ten years, the Maritime Exploration Squadron and SELEX Galileo have worked effectively, side by side, to train personnel and develop increasingly versatile and effective versions of the ATOS system in response to the growing complexity of operations. Beyond narcotics and immigration activities, the system is also used for maritime economic and financial policing, which under Decree-Law no. 68/2001 is conducted exclusively by the Guardia di Finanza's naval aviation component, as well as for the protection of health and the environment.

"We are delighted with our first 10 years of collaboration with SELEX Galileo," said Brigadier General Mennato Possemato, Commander of the Air-Naval Operational Command. "The activities of the Air-Naval Operational Command have increased constantly in the last ten years, in particular in the struggle against drug trafficking and all the seaborne crimes," he added. "The geopolitical context is increasingly complex and challenging, and we are certain that by working together with industry and other bodies we will secure renewed success in addressing the new challenges ahead of us."

"For us Guardia di Finanza is more than simply first user of the ATOS system," said Fabrizio Giulianini, CEO of SELEX Galileo. "In recent years Guardia di Finanza has assisted us by providing invaluable suggestions for evolution and upgrades that have undoubtedly had a

significant impact on our many international commercial successes. We hope to remain at their side in the decades to come as providers of state-of-the-art technology.”

Notes to the editor:

SELEX Galileo has sold over 45 systems in the past 10 years on different types of platforms, both fixed and rotating-wing aircraft, including the ATR42, ATR72, DASH-8, CN235 and Beechcraft King Air 350.

Applications of the ATOS system in Italy include the ATR 42 MP, and a light-weight version installed on P166-DP1 aircraft used by Guardia di Finanza.

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