

Frontex deploys unmanned aircraft to support Greece with border control

2022-07-11

Frontex Executive Director ad interim, Aija Kalnaja, visited Crete last week to attend a demonstration of an unmanned aircraft deployed by Frontex that will soon start patrolling the Eastern Mediterranean to help Hellenic authorities detect cross-border crime and save lives at sea. Hellenic officials, including Secretary General for Insular Policy and Aegean Emmanuel Koutoulakis and the Vice Admiral of the Hellenic Coast Guard Georgios Alexandrakis attended the event.

The aircraft will be part of Poseidon, one of the agency's largest operations at EU's external borders. At the moment, there are 429 Frontex officers and staff in Greece along with 14 boats, two aircraft and 40 vehicles, including patrol cars, transport and thermovision vehicles. It will strengthen the operational capabilities of the Hellenic Coast Guard in border surveillance. The aircraft carries surveillance equipment, including thermal cameras and radars.

"The aircraft is capable of flying during both day and night. It has a capacity to live-stream video and other information directly to the Frontex Headquarters and our partners. This allows for real-time assessments and reactions to different situations, when necessary," said Frontex Executive Director ad interim Aija Kalnaja.

"Our main mission for the upcoming months is to support the Greek authorities with border management and pre-frontier surveillance, as well as detecting and preventing cross border crime. It will support the efforts of saving lives of people who are very often victims of smugglers and traffickers in human beings. A similar aircraft deployed in Malta has contributed to saving thousands of lives at sea," she added.

In the first half of this year, there were more than 17 900 detections of illegal border crossings on the Eastern Mediterranean route, 125% more than in the same period of last year.

Frontex missions contribute to the protection of the safety of all Europeans by helping the national authorities fight cross-border crime and address effectively the hybrid threats coming from the outside of the EU.

