

**56 migrants rescued by AFM today**

**Luqa, Malta, June 7, 2008.** Earlier today, MRCC Rome informed the Armed Forces of Malta's Operations' Centre at Luqa Barracks that an Italian fishing-vessel, the PRIAMO, had reported a first boat with some 28 illegal migrants onboard in a position 50 nautical miles (NM) south of Malta. The Maritime Squadron's Protector-class patrol vessel P-52 was immediately dispatched to the area to investigate.

A short while later at 12.45hrs, the Italian tug-boat CAPO MULINO informed the AFM's Ops Centre that yet another boat with another 28 illegal migrants onboard had capsized this time in their immediate area, and that they were clutching onto the tuna-pen their tug had in tow. This second incident was a mere 6 NM away from the first reported incident. Due priority was reallocated to this case as the P-52 was diverted towards the CAPO MULINO, with the AFM's Air Squadron scrambling an Islander aircraft to the scene as well to aurally assess the gravity of the scenario.

By 15.40hrs, P-52 had arrived on the scene to recover the 28 migrants in distress, of whom 6 were females and 1 was also pregnant. At 17.20hrs, P-52 had reached the second position and recovered a second group of 28 migrants, of whom 7 were females.

Patrolboat P-52, having stabilised its fairly large human cargo, requested the immediate medical evacuation (MEDEVAC) of one of the females taken onboard. The AFM's Air Wing AS-12 Alouette rescue-helicopter has been sent, and is expected to land at Mater Dei hospital at 1950hrs.

*Thanks to Major Ivan M. CONSIGLIO, AFM.*