



EUROPEAN BORDER AND COAST GUARD AGENCY

Our internal ref. SAM/FSC/2023
Your ref. Ares(2023)4474773

Mr Henrik Nielsen

Director of Directorate B -
Schengen, Borders & Visa
DG HOME, European Commission

Dear Mr Nielsen,

With reference to the written question E-001945/2023 ‘Is the Commission ready to act after the Crotona cover-up?’ submitted by MEPs (Erik Marquardt, Laura Ferrara, Francisco Guerreiro, Stelios Kouloglou, Pierre Larroustourou, Karen Melchior, Monika Vana, Rasmus Andresen, Ignazio Corrao, Saskia Bricmont, Matjaž Nemeč, Isabel Santos, Mick Wallace, Rosa D’Amato, Michael Bloss, Dietmar Köster, Tineke Strik, Domènec Ruiz Devesa, Gwendoline Delbos-Corfield, Damien Carême, Katrin Langensiepen, Tiziana Beghin, Matthias Ecke, Eugenia Rodríguez Palop, Brando Benifei, Maria Arena) to the Commission, please find below our reply.

1. What is Frontex’s assessment of the facts uncovered, especially since they are not consistent with the statements made by Executive Director Hans Leijtens in the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs on 23 May 2023?

On the allegation that Frontex mission reports “... revealed that a plane operated by the border agency had reported signs of distress to both the agency and Italian authorities”, it is worth to highlight that in the sighting report and subsequently mission report, Frontex did not refer to signs of distress. *At the time of the sighting, the boat was underway at a regular course, speed of 6 knots, presenting good buoyancy. While the vessel was being monitored by Frontex plane, only one person was visible on the upper deck. By using an Infra-red camera, a significant thermal response from the open hatches was observed.*

On the allegation that Frontex “...tried to conceal how much they knew”, we would like to stress that, as foreseen in the operational procedures, *Frontex duly communicated the abovementioned information to the International Coordination Centre established under the framework of Joint Operation Themis, to the Italian National Coordination Centre, and to the Italian Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre. In the Sighting Report and Mission Report, pictures of the vessel, geographical location, course, speed and information on the significant thermal response were included. There was never an attempt or intention to conceal any sort of information.*

I remain at your disposal should you need any further clarifications.

Yours sincerely,

Electronically signed
Hans Leijtens
Executive Director