

# News Release



Ref: SNMG2 2009 / 05

12<sup>th</sup> August 2009

## Hands across the Gulf of Aden Ocean

The Commanders of two major Naval Task Forces met yesterday in the Gulf of Aden to discuss how best to cooperate against the threat of piracy in the region.

Rear Admiral Wang Zhiguo of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy, Commander Task Force 529, met Commodore Steve Chick (Royal Navy), Commander of the NATO Task Force onboard the NATO Flagship, HMS CORNWALL. The meeting took place amidst the growing cooperation and coordination that is evident amongst the counter piracy forces operating in the area.

Commodore Chick said

**' Although the PLA Navy and NATO have different counter piracy methods we are united in the same objective; that is to prevent and disrupt piracy attacks and protect merchant shipping'**

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The PLA Navy approach is to give direct protection to merchant ships by conducting group transits through the Gulf of Aden. Whilst the vessels within the groups are usually Chinese flagged, other vessels are welcome to steam in company with them and benefit from the deterrence provided by the presence of the Chinese warships.

NATO' counter piracy mission, Operation Allied Protector and other multinational forces, including the European Maritime Force and the Combined Maritime Force, in turn provide protection of other merchant traffic by policing the International Recommended Transit Corridor.

Commodore Chick continued:

**'The combined effect of the transit corridor, protected by multinational forces and PLA Naval forces conducting group transits in adjacent waters is formidable. This collaboration provides marked improvement in our ability to deter and disrupt pirate activity whilst reassuring merchant traffic. The understanding gained from my meeting today with Rear Admiral Wang Zhigou has greatly assisted in generating future mutual cooperation between our two Task Forces'**

Close co-operation between NATO and other traditional partners is now well developed. Disruption of pirate attacks by forces from different nations is common place and co-ordinated through 3 main Tasks Forces led by NATO, European Union Maritime Force and the Combined Maritime Force. Routine and rapid information exchange is key to the success of this coordinated effort. The implementation of a region wide common reporting system and radio frequencies means that any

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indication of pirate activity is passed rapidly around the forces. This allows much improved speed of reaction by warships resulting in many pirate attacks being disrupted before they commence.

Russian, Japanese and Indian forces also operate in the area and provide protection to groups of merchant ships flagged to their nation. Through a series of meetings with the respective Task Force Commanders the co-ordination of effort is improving and more pressure being applied on the pirates.

*Ends*

#### **Notes to editors**

1. NATO units form Standing NATO Maritime Group 2 (SNMG2) engaged in the NATO's counter piracy mission, Operation Allied Protector in the Gulf of Aden. The Operation is designed to ensure the safety of shipping in the region by disrupting and deterring piracy activity and giving protection to innocent fishing and commercial shipping.
2. Commodore Steve Chick joined the Royal Navy in 1979. His Command appointments have included the destroyer, HMS NOTTINGHAM, which included a deployment to the Middle East and the frigate HMS CHATHAM which was involved in disaster relief operations off Sri Lanka following the tsunami, for which he was awarded the CBE. He has been Deputy, Flag Officer Sea Training, responsible for training all Royal Navy major surface units as well as a number of ships from NATO nations. Prior to assuming his current appointment as Commander of the Standing NATO Maritime Group 2 in June 2009, he commanded the aircraft carrier HMS ILLUSTRIOUS.

#### **Image:**

1. Hands across the ocean – Commodore Steve Chick Royal Navy greets Rear Admiral Wang Zhigou onboard the NATO flagship, HMS CORNWALL.

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