

NATO Attends the Launch of the Maritime Piracy Humanitarian Response Programme

The Maritime Piracy Humanitarian Response Programme (MPHRP) was officially launched on World Maritime Day, 29 September 2011, at the London Docklands Museum. This programme has been developed “to assist seafarers and their families with the humanitarian aspects of a traumatic incident caused by a piracy attack, armed robbery or being taken hostage”, by a pan-industry alliance of ship owners, unions, managers, insurers, manning agents and welfare associations.

It will be implemented worldwide through the provision of Good Practice Guides for Shipping Companies. These guides deal with the humanitarian aspect of piracy attacks and are designed to assist seafarers and shipping companies in the preparation for, management during, and response following a potential attack. Some companies have training programmes to ensure that seafarers are prepared to face the possibility of being pirated. These guides will go a long way in assisting companies to serve the needs of their seafarers.

The Chief of Staff at Allied Maritime Command Northwood HQ, Rear Admiral Hank Ort, is a key supporter of the MPHRP and was present during the launch. He was part of the panel comprised of key programme personnel and various organizations’ members involved in the efforts to counter piracy. Admiral Ort replied to questions about NATO’s involvement in the MPHRP by reaffirming NATO’s position for a collaborative approach with many partners in dealing with piracy and by recognizing the need to support those who are most affected by piracy; the seafarers and their families.

NATO has supported this initiative through the involvement of the NATO Shipping Centre with the Programme Steering Committee, providing feedback and recommendations during the development of the Good Practice Guides. Additionally, the NATO Shipping Centre has partnered with other members of the Steering Committee from the International Transport Workers Federation in developing and delivering workshops to the industry on preparations for facing piracy.

Mr Peter Swift, the Chair of the Steering Committee for the programme, acknowledged the good work being done by NATO and other naval forces in fighting piracy on the high seas, but added that the additional show of support for and involvement with this programme to address the needs of the seafarers was much appreciated and strengthened the group as a whole.