

# News Release



**Allied Maritime  
Component Command  
Headquarters Northwood**



Ref: SNMG1 2009 /27

19<sup>th</sup> November 2009

## **NATO Warship Disrupts Pirate Attack Off Somalia**

**GULF OF ADEN:** At 08:44 this morning whilst on patrol in the Gulf of Aden, the Flagship of NATO's Standing Maritime Group One (SNMG1) received a distress call from a cargo vessel, which reported that it was being pursued by pirates and in need of immediate assistance.

The Flagship - Portuguese Navy frigate NRP Álvares Cabral, scrambled its helicopter and made best speed to intercept the pirate ship that was in waters 110 miles north of the Somali port of Boosaaso and 60 miles south of the Internationally Recommended Traffic Corridor (IRTC) – a route through the Gulf of Aden established to protect maritime shipping.

An EU Naval Force (EUNAVFOR) Spanish Maritime Patrol Aircraft also assisted in locating the pirates, and as the NATO warship's helicopter approached the scene, the aircrew witnessed the pirates throwing a number of weapons and a ladder overboard.

Shortly after 11 o'clock this morning the pirate 'skiff' was boarded by a Portuguese Marines team from Álvares Cabral. The marines inspected the skiff and identified the suspect pirates, gathering in the process important operational information. On completion of the action the NATO Flagship resumed patrolling the sea area to protect shipping.

Rear-Admiral Pereira da Cunha, commander of the NATO Task-Force and embarked in NRP Álvares Cabral stated "This naval operation should be seen as a warning to pirates that NATO and her maritime partners are co-operating, well-coordinated and ready to help deter piracy attacks in the Gulf of Aden".

## **Standing NATO Maritime Group 1 (SNMG1)**

The Commanding Officer of Álvares Cabral, Captain Nobre de Sousa, also commented – “Álvares Cabral’s action today has demonstrated NATO forces’ resolve in keeping the Gulf of Aden safe from the scourge of piracy, while supporting regional seafarers”.

With this action, co-ordinated between NATO and EU assets, another pirate attack was disrupted thus contributing to the international efforts to tackle piracy actions off Somalia.

#### **Notes to editors**

1. The four ships comprising SNMG1 are:
  - NRP Álvares Cabral (flagship, Portuguese Navy)
  - USS Donald Cook (United States of America)
  - USS Stephen W Groves (United States of America)
  - ITS Libeccio (Italy)
2. Rear Admiral José Pereira da Cunha (Portuguese Navy) has previously been in the maritime theatre of operations as Commander SNMG1 conducting the former NATO counter-piracy operation Allied Protector for over three months. During this period numerous pirate attacks were thwarted, and pirates disarmed to prevent further criminal activity. More than 30 vulnerable ships were escorted, including vessels carrying critical supplies to NATO forces in Afghanistan and carrying vital humanitarian aid from the UN World Food Program. Rear Admiral da Cunha assumed Command of the force on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2009 in El Ferrol, Spain.
3. Permanently assigned to NATO, SNMG1 is a multi-national Naval Group that provides the NATO Alliance with the ability to quickly respond to crisis situations anywhere in the world. A capable, stand-alone task group, SNMG1 is one of four standing maritime elements that form a flexible core around which NATO can build a larger force to meet a wide range of missions that will include non-combatant evacuations, consequence management, counter terrorism, crisis response, embargo operations, etc.
4. Photos and footage available.

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## Standing NATO Maritime Group 1 (SNMG1)