

News Release



Ref: SNMG1 2009 / 26

**Allied Maritime
Component Command
Headquarters Northwood**



9th November 2009

Exchange of Maritime Command for NATO Ships Fighting Piracy in Gulf of Aden

LONDON: Today saw an exchange of maritime command between Standing NATO Maritime Group 2 (SNMG2) to SNMG1 for Operation Ocean Shield - the code name for NATO's counter piracy mission in the Gulf of Aden. NATO warships have been operating in the Gulf of Aden for the last 8 months following a sharp increase in pirate attacks on maritime trade passing through the area.

Onboard his flagship HMS Cornwall, Commodore Steve Chick CBE Royal Navy summarized his mission:

"Over the last 5 months Standing NATO Maritime Group 2 has contributed significantly to countering the piracy threat in and near the Gulf of Aden. The key to NATO's success has been the forging of close working relations with not only our traditional maritime partners but also other navies including the Chinese, Japanese and Indians. Together we have achieved seamless cooperation which has ensured that the vast majority of attacks in the Gulf of Aden are deterred or disrupted. Credit must also be given to the merchant shipping community, whose increased vigilance and use of self protective measures means they are now better able to defend themselves whilst naval units respond. This operation has been demanding on NATO warships and sailors but its success has demonstrated NATO's ability to react effectively to the maritime security challenges we face"

Rear Admiral José Domingos Pereira da Cunha who commands NATO's SNMG1 commented on his mission "I am delighted that SNMG1 ships have arrived in the Gulf of

Standing NATO Maritime Group 1 (SNMG1)

Aden to ensure continuity to NATO's counter piracy campaign. The warships will provide protection to maritime traffic in the region and contribute to NATO's initiatives to help the states in and near the Gulf of Aden strengthen their own defence against piracy. Operation Ocean Shield proves the ability of sustained long term maritime operations away from our usual operating areas."

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 theatre 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 23rd January 2009 in El Ferrol, Spain.
3. Permanently assigned to NATO, SNMG1 is a multi-national Naval Group that provides the 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.

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