

News Release



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NATO flagship evacuates casualty from merchant ship in pirate waters

On 31 October, the NATO Flagship in the Gulf of Aden, HMS Cornwall, received an emergency call over the radio from MV APL Hamburg and as she was only some 40 nm away, sprang to her aid. A crew member was critically ill and needed medical assistance.

The Royal Navy frigate is currently part of NATO's Operation Ocean Shield task group combating piracy off the coast of Somalia.

Lieutenant Commander Matt Dodds, the on watch Principal Warfare Officer coordinating HMS Cornwall's the effort, said

“Our ability to respond immediately to any manner of situations meant that we could offer assistance and get the man to hospital ashore in short order. The reason we are out here is to conduct counter piracy operations to safeguard the merchant shipping in the area, however protection of life at sea can call on the ship in many different ways. .”

Standing NATO Maritime Group 2 (SNMG2)

As Cornwall closed the APL Hamburg's position she launched her Lynx helicopter to get the Ship's medical team to the scene immediately. It quickly became obvious that urgent, specialist treatment was required and so he was winched off the merchantman and transferred to HMS Cornwall where he was readied for a longer helicopter journey.

In the meantime HMS Cornwall's team used their extensive satellite communications facilities to contact the Omani authorities as the nearest hospital facilities ashore to be ready to receive the critically ill crewman. Once everything was in place, the helicopter was launched a second time and he was flown directly to an Omani hospital for treatment. Unfortunately, his condition was too severe and despite getting him to hospital quickly, he did not recover.

Lt Cdr Dodd continued, "Our inherent capability as a warship means that we have more specialist medical staff and facilities than that expected on a merchant ship and of course the flexibility given by our Lynx helicopter means that we can respond immediately in the event of an emergency

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