

News Release



**Allied Maritime Command
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NATO Warships Meet for Counter Piracy Mission Handover

After busy months on patrol in the Gulf of Aden and Somali Basin, a task force of NATO warships today handed over their counter-piracy mission, (code-named *Operation Ocean Shield*) to the new task force of NATO ships which had sailed to the area to take up the mission. NATO warships have been conducting counter piracy patrols off the Horn of Africa, an area of strategic importance, since October 2008 and today it was the turn of the 5 warships from the Standing NATO Maritime Group 2, who currently come from the UK (flagship), Greece, Italy, Turkey and USA to pick up the baton of this ongoing mission.

Speaking about the handover between the two NATO groups, which took place at Djibouti, NATO's maritime commander, Admiral Sir Trevor Soar commented "The continuing presence of warships from the Standing NATO Maritime Groups, together with warships from the EU Naval Force, Combined Maritime Force and other nations such as Russia, China and India is essential if we are to combat the scourge of piracy. Piracy has the potential to affect us all given that 95% of the world's trade goes by sea. As we have clearly demonstrated NATO is making a real impact in deterring and disrupting piracy".

Speaking from his flagship 'Absalon', the commander of NATO's Maritime Group One, Commodore Rune (Royal Danish Navy) said "The last few months have been extremely busy for the NATO task force. We have, together with our maritime partners, actively disrupted and prevented attacks by armed pirate gangs on innocent vessels, who carry the goods and food into our countries. Whilst I am proud of what we have achieved, NATO remains ever vigilant."

Standing NATO Maritime Group 2 (SNMG2)

Embarked in HMS Chatham, the commander of NATO's Maritime Group 2 is Commodore Steve Chick (Royal Navy). Commenting on his return to the area he said "My task group is well-trained, well-equipped and ready to tackle the job ahead".

Last week, the NATO nations decided to extend Operation Ocean Shield until the end of 2012.

Ends

Notes to editors

1. The NATO task force TF 508 conducting Operation Ocean Shield is one out of three coalition task forces operating in the fight against piracy. TF 508 consists presently of five ships:

HMS CHATHAM (Flagship - Royal Navy)

USS COLE (US Navy)

TCG GELIBOLU (Turkish Navy)

HS LIMNOS (Greek Navy)

ITS SCIROCCO (Italian Navy)

2. At the request of the UN in late 2008, NATO started to provide escorts to UN World Food Programme vessels transiting through the Somali Basin. This operation has now been succeeded by Operation Ocean Shield, which as well as deterring and disrupting pirate activity additionally offers training to regional countries in developing their own capacity to combat piracy activities.

3. NATO is conducting counter-piracy activities in full complementarity with the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions (1816, 1838, 1846, 1851 and 1897) and in coordination with other international actors including the European Union.

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