

News Release



**Allied Maritime
Component Command
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ROYAL NAVY WARSHIP HMS CHATHAM ARRIVES IN GULF OF ADEN FOR NATO COUNTER-PIRACY OPERATION

Royal Navy warship HMS Chatham has arrived in the Gulf of Aden to take part in NATO's Operation *Ocean Shield* - the code name for NATO's counter piracy mission off the Horn of Africa and into the Somali Basin. Along with other multinational Task Groups and warships in the area, HMS CHATHAM will help to protect the merchant ships, many of which bring goods in to the UK, as they transit this busy sea area.

Since leaving the UK at the beginning of the month, HMS Chatham's Ship's Company have spent their time carrying out 'mission rehearsal' practicing the tactics and procedures. The full range of the Ship's counter piracy capabilities has been tested, from the Lynx helicopter and fast rigid inflatable boats, though to the embarked Royal Marines boarding team; the Sailors and Marines are all now eager to use their training in an operational theatre.

HMS Chatham is currently patrolling a section of the Internationally Recommended Transit Corridor (IRTC), an agreed shipping lane that passes through the Gulf of Aden, where the NATO Task Group and warships from other nations can oversee merchant shipping, detect suspicious activity and deter the pirates from mounting an attack.

Captain Chris Beesley, the Officer in Charge of the Royal Marines detachment said "During the transit to our area of operations, we have integrated with the Ship's Company and kept a busy training programme. This has included practicing our Close Quarter Battle drills, fast rope insertions and, of course, plenty of physical exercise. All the Royal Marines on board are now eager to begin our operational tasking."

Commander Simon Huntington, the Ship's Commanding Officer said "It is good to be on patrol here after months of preparation. On our first day on patrol there have already been 3 separate occasions where warships have intervened in suspected pirate activity in the IRTC. HMS CHATHAM is ready and eager to contribute to that effort."

HMS Chatham, a Type 22 frigate was launched in 1988. Based in Plymouth, she is 150m long, has a crew of 250 and displaces 5,300 tonnes. Whilst officially designated a frigate, her comprehensive weapons fit gives her, in reality, the firepower of a cruiser. She is capable of engaging targets above, on or below the sea surface. The Ship carries anti-air and anti-missile SeaWolf missiles, anti-ship Harpoon missiles, anti-submarine Stingray torpedoes and a Lynx helicopter; she is also fitted with a variety of guns of up to 4½" (114mm) bore, advanced radars, sonars, computer systems and communications equipment to carry out her tasking. Powered by gas turbine engines, HMS Chatham can sprint at speeds of up to 30 knots. She is the seventh Royal Navy ship to bear the name; one of her predecessors had the honour of transporting the body of Admiral Lord Nelson from HMS Victory to Greenwich Hospital, where he lay in state until his funeral at St Pauls Cathedral.

Standing NATO Maritime Group 1 (SNMG1)

ENDS

Notes to editors

1. The four ships comprising SNMG1 are:

- HDMS Absalon (flagship, Danish Navy)
- HMCS Fredericton (Canadian Navy)
- USS Boone (USA Navy)
- HMS Chatham (UK Navy)

2. 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.

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