

News Release



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**Allied Maritime
Component Command
Headquarters Northwood**



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NATO WARSHIP HMS CHATHAM IN RESCUE MISSION

London: Royal Navy warship HMS Chatham, deployed on NATO's counter piracy Operation Ocean Shield in the Gulf of Aden, yesterday provided urgent medical assistance to a seriously ill merchant seaman.

The British frigate came to the rescue after the master of the MV Zakyntos, a Liberian flagged oil tanker that was transiting through the Internationally Recommended Transit Corridor (IRTC), radioed the warship to say that one of his Filipino crew had been suffering severe abdominal pain since Sunday 14 February and could they help. HMS Chatham's Medical Officer, Surgeon Lieutenant Sarah Droog spoke to the master of MV Zakyntos from Chatham's Bridge and assessed it was most likely appendicitis, which required urgent treatment.

HMS Chatham's Commanding Officer, Commander Simon Huntington, quickly made the decision to dispatch Surgeon Lieutenant Droog to the merchant vessel in one of the ship's seaboats, so that she could provide immediate care. When the patient had been stabilised, the ship's Lynx helicopter was launched, and despite Zakyntos' deck constantly pitching in a 2 to 3 metre swell, the helicopter's crew was able to winch the patient into the aircraft and transfer him safely to the warship. Once on board HMS Chatham he received medical care whilst best speed was made towards the port of Salalah in Oman.

Once in helicopter range of Salalah the stricken seaman was transferred by air from HMS Chatham to a local hospital for further treatment.

Surgeon Lieutenant Droog later said "It was great to see HMS Chatham's team working together to enable the safe transfer of this patient to hospital. We all wish the patient a very speedy recovery."

Commander Huntington, said "For the second time in 2 weeks HMS Chatham has been able to render assistance to fellow seafarers. This is one of the many roles that the Royal Navy performs as part of the NATO task force. Whilst our core business is counter-piracy, as my Ship's Company have demonstrated today, we are trained and equipped to respond to rapidly changing circumstances wherever we are needed".

Ends

Standing NATO Maritime Group 1 (SNMG1)

Notes to editors

1. 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.

2. The ships currently comprising SNMG1 are:

HDMS Absalon (flagship, Danish Navy)

USS Boone (USA Navy)

HMS Chatham (UK Navy)

3. 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.

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