

News Release



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NATO WARSHIP FORCES RELEASE OF PIRATED DHOW

As part of her counter piracy mission Operation Ocean Shield, a NATO warship was involved in dramatic events in the Gulf of Aden yesterday that disrupted a pirate attack against a merchant ship and resulted in the release of a hijacked dhow.

At 0840 local time, the Turkish ship TCG GELIBOLU responded to a distress call from the Danish flagged chemical carrier MV TORM RAGNHILD stating that the ship was being attacked by 6 pirates with AK47s and rocket propelled grenades. As TCG GELIBOLU raced to the scene an EU Naval Force French Maritime Patrol Aircraft provided regular position reports and reassurance to the merchant ship. Quick reaction by the alert crew and skilful evasive manoeuvres allowed MV TORM RAGNHILD to escape the pirates after 40 minutes of determined attack.

At 0922 the Maritime Patrol Aircraft reported the attack skiffs were being lifted on to the nearby Indian flagged dhow, MSF SAFINA LA GAYATRI. It soon became apparent that this dhow, together with its 21 crew and cargo of livestock had been previously hijacked by the pirates to act as a mother ship.

Knowing that the NATO warship TCG GELIBOLU was racing to the scene convinced the pirates that the game was up and forced them to make their way towards the Northern coast of Somalia.

In the early hours of the following morning the pirates left the dhow and proceeded ashore leaving the crew unharmed. TCG GELIBOLU, who had remained in close proximity overnight, then boarded the dhow to ensure all pirates had left and provide assistance to the crew. After giving some food and water to the crew, TCG GELIBOLU escorted the dhow into safer waters before resuming its counter piracy patrol

The Commanding Officer of TCG GELIBOLU, Commander Baybars Kucukatay Turkish Navy said:

Standing NATO Maritime Group 2 (SNMG2)

'With GELIBOLU quickly arriving on the scene the pirates had little option to abandon the dhow and leave the crew unharmed - our priority was the safety of the crew of the dhow'.

Background Information:

TCG GELIBOLU is part of the Standing NATO Maritime Group 2 patrolling the Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean as part of NATO's Operation Ocean Shield. The NATO task force consists of:

HMS CHATHAM (Flagship) – UK
USS COLE – US
TCG GELIBOLU – Turkey
HS LIMNOS - Greece
ITS SCIROCCO – Italy

At sea NATO is working closely with other partners including EU Maritime Force, Combined Maritime Force as well as other navies, including China, Japan, India and Russia.

NATO has contributed to the international counter piracy effort off the Horn of Africa since December 2008. The mission has expanded from escorting UN and World Food Programme Shipping under Operation Allied Provider to protecting merchant traffic in the Gulf of Aden under Operation Allied Protector. In addition to these activities and as part of the latest mission, Operation Ocean Shield, NATO is working with other international bodies to help develop capacity of countries in the region to tackle piracy on their own.

NATO has recently announced its commitment to Operation Ocean Shield has been extended to December 2012.

Pictures:

- A.** The pirated dhow MSF SAFANI AL GAYATRI under the watchful eye of TCG GELIBOLU.
- B.** TCG GELIBOLU's boarding team board MSF SAFANI AL GAYATRI to provide assistance.

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