

News Release



**Allied Maritime
Component Command
Headquarters Northwood**



Ref: SNMG2 2010 / 12

15 April 2010

SUCCESSSES FOR NATO IN THE FIGHT AGAINST PIRACY

The five ships of NATO's Task Force conducting counter piracy operations have been at the centre of the fight against piracy in the waters off Somalia in recent days.

Operating deep in the Indian Ocean, the Greek warship HS LIMNOS saw action against 3 pirate groups in as many days. Working closely with Swedish and Luxemburg maritime patrol aircraft operating from the Seychelles, the frigate destroyed 6 pirate attack boats together with all of their weapons and other piracy equipment between 7 and 9 April. As a result 30 pirates can no longer attack innocent merchant vessels.

In the Gulf of Aden, on 3 April the Turkish frigate TCG GELIBOLU rushed to the assistance of the Danish flagged chemical carrier MV TORM RAGNHILD that was being attacked by 6 pirates with AK 47 rifles and rocket propelled grenades. On arrival of the warship the pirates quickly re-embarked on their 'mother-ship'; the hijacked dhow MSF SAFINA AL GAYATRI. Subsequent actions by TCG GELIBOLU forced the pirates to release the 21 Indian crew unharmed together with the cargo of livestock in the early hours of 4 April, 10 miles to the North East of Boosaaso, the regional capital of Puntland, Somalia.

USS COLE meanwhile has continued her patrol of the Internationally Recognized Transit Corridor that runs through the heart of the Gulf of Aden. The relentless task of identifying potential pirate vessels amongst the numerous local trading dhows and fishing skiffs is particularly challenging but essential if USS COLE is to be ready to rapidly intervene to any incident. Reassuring merchant traffic by USS COLE's physical presence and regular radio broadcasts is a key part of the mission and encourages them to implement their own counter piracy measures.

Most recently the NATO Task Force flagship, HMS CHATHAM, has been involved in a 5 day operation to release the Indian dhow VISHVAKAYLAN after intercepting the dhow 100 miles to the North East of Socotra on 6 April. The hijacked dhow, with 8

Standing NATO Maritime Group 2 (SNMG2)

pirates onboard had been involved in an attempt to capture the merchant vessel MV HAMBURG BRIDGE on 5 April. Once intercepted, the frigate maintained continuous pressure on the pirates by shadowing the dhow weakening their resolve and eventually forcing them to make for land. Careful, and occasionally tense, negotiations ensued which eventually left the pirates with no option but to leave the dhow on 10 April and release the 15 crew unharmed. HMS CHATHAM went on to provide assistance to the crew before escorting it into safe waters.

The fifth ship of the Task Force, the Italian frigate ITS SCIROCCO, made a brief refuelling stop in the Seychelles following a successful operation on 16 March to release the hijacked Iranian dhow SAAD 1 which had been acting as a mother ship. In addition, Scirocco rescued 3 stranded men who had been adrift at sea without food, water or fuel for 4 days some 250 miles from land. The warship has now resumed her patrol deep in the Indian Ocean ready to intercept pirate groups making their way out to the shipping lanes.

The Commander of the NATO Task Force, Commodore Steve Chick of the UK Royal Navy said:

‘This has been a busy period for the NATO Task Force and we have seen significant successes against the pirates. The release of the 3 dhows is particularly satisfying as we have been able to deny the pirates the use of mother ships from which they can base their attacks at significant ranges from the shore.’

He went onto say

‘The fact that Task Force ships have been involved in so many incidents across such vast distances shows the capability of NATO to counter the threat posed by piracy, wherever it surfaces.’

Notes to editors:

1. The NATO Task Force 508 conducting Operation Ocean Shield is one 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. Background: 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 compliance with UN Security Council Resolutions (1816, 1838, 1846, 1851 and 1897) and in coordination with other international actors including the European Union.

Media Inquiries only to:

Public Affairs Officer
+44 (0)1923 956763
+44 (0) 7747 008508

Standing NATO Maritime Group 2 (SNMG2)