

News Release



**Allied Maritime
Command Headquarters
Northwood UK
www.manw.nato.int**



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NATO COUNTER PIRACY COMMANDER PASSES HELM TO HIS SUCCESSOR

Over the weekend Commodore Christian Rune (Royal Danish Navy), the Commander of Standing NATO Maritime Group One (SNMG1) handed over command of NATO's counter piracy Task Force of warships operating off the coast of Somalia, to Commodore Michiel Hijmans (Royal Netherlands Navy). Commodore Hijmans is the Commander of SNMG2. The handover took place onboard Danish warship Esbern Snare in the Southern Red Sea.

On completion of the command handover, Commodore Rune said: "It has been a great pleasure to command the NATO forces to fight piracy off the Horn of Africa and I have been proud to serve with each and every one of them. As I hand over command to Commodore Hijmans, I know he will carry on the fight to help keep the sea lanes safer for merchant ships".

After the handover, Commodore Hijmans and staff returned to his NATO flagship HNLMS De Ruyter. His group of SNMG2 ships will now be on patrol off the Horn of Africa for the next 6 months.

"I sincerely want to thank Commodore Rune and his team for their hard work over the last 5 months. With great flexibility and forward thinking, they contributed significantly to the international community's efforts to combat piracy" stated Rear Admiral Hank Ort, the Chief of Staff at NATO Maritime Headquarters at Northwood, London.

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Standing NATO Maritime Group 2 (SNMG2)

Background Information:

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 and 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.

Standing NATO Maritime Group 2 is permanently assigned to NATO. It 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 and 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.

NATO has announced its continuing commitment to counter-piracy by extending Operation Ocean Shield to December 2012.

NATO Forces currently in Operation Ocean Shield:

HNLMS DE RUYTER (Flagship) - Netherlands
HDMS ESBERN SNARE - Denmark
USS LABOON - United States of America
TCG GAZIANTEP – Turkey

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Standing NATO Maritime Group 2 (SNMG2)