

News Release



**Allied Maritime
Command Headquarters
Northwood**



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NATO WARSHIP HMS MONTROSE DISRUPTS PIRATES

London: Earlier today after only 4 days into her latest NATO counter-piracy patrol in the Gulf of Aden, British navy warship HMS Montrose has disrupted a group of suspected pirates believed to be about to attack a North Korean merchant vessel who was transiting the Internationally Recommended Transit Corridor (IRTC) in the Gulf of Aden.

HMS Montrose received a distress call from the MV Mi Rae who reported that a gang of men in a nearby boat were acting in a suspicious manner. Fearing that a pirate attack was imminent, the Commanding Officer from HMS Montrose responded immediately by sending the ship's Lynx helicopter to investigate the scene.

When HMS Montrose's helicopter arrived at the scene, the suspected pirates moved away from the MV Mi Rae and the helicopter crew observed the men in the boat throwing objects, including a rocket propelled grenade launcher, overboard before stopping in the water.

HMS MONTROSE immediately despatched her team of Royal Marines and Royal Navy sailors to investigate and question the suspected pirates.

The Ship's Commanding Officer, Commander Jonathan Lett Royal Navy, said: "HMS Montrose has quickly and effectively deterred piracy in the Gulf of Aden and I am proud of my ship's company. As part of the NATO counter-piracy task force, HMS Montrose is providing much reassurance to the merchant shipping community".

End text.

Standing NATO Maritime Group 1 (SNMG1)

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

NATO Task Forces currently in Operation Ocean Shield:

HDMS ESBERN SNARE (Flagship) - Denmark
HMS MONTROSE – United Kingdom
USS KAUFFMAN – United States of America
USS LABOON – United States of America
ITS BERSAGLIERE - Italy

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