

News Release



**Allied Maritime
Command Headquarters
Northwood**



24 OCTOBER 2010

NATO WARSHIP USS LABOON DISRUPTS TWO GROUPS OF PIRATES WITHIN TWO DAYS – GULF OF ADEN

LONDON: NATO warship USS Laboon, who is operating in the Gulf of Aden as part of NATO's counter-piracy mission, code-named *Operation Ocean Shield*, disrupted a group of suspected pirates yesterday. The US warship received a distress call from the master of a merchant vessel who reported that his ship was being fired upon by men in the Internationally Recommended Transit Corridor (IRTC). As USS Laboon raced to the scene, Indian warship INS Rajput, who was patrolling nearby, also helped to intercept the skiff.

When USS Laboon approached the skiff, the men onboard were seen throwing items in to the sea and when the US navy team went on board they found several pieces of piracy related paraphernalia.

This pirate disruption is in fact the second in two days for the NATO warship. On Friday USS Laboon also prevented pirates from successfully attacking a merchant vessel sailing in the Gulf of Aden. When the men saw USS Laboon appear on the horizon they broke off the attack and tried to escape. Unable to outrun the warship, the skiff was eventually stopped in the water and the men surrendered.

Speaking about the piracy disruptions, Commander Donald J Donegan, the Commanding Officer of USS Laboon commented "The two intercepts of pirate skiffs in two days highlights the outstanding cooperation that is being achieved in the Gulf of Aden. The prompt and accurate reporting by merchant ships alerted the maritime forces, and yesterday's disruption was made easier by the close coordination between NATO and the Indian naval assets on patrol".

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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
USS KAUFFMAN – United States of America
USS LABOON - United States of America
HMS MONTROSE – United Kingdom
ITS BERSAGLIERE - Italy

Media Inquiries only to:

Public Affairs Officer
+44 (0)1923 956763
+44 (0) 7747 008508
<mailto:pio@manw.nato.int>

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