

News Release



**Allied Maritime
Command Headquarters
Northwood**



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NATO WARSHIP HMS MONTROSE PREVENTS PIRATE ATTACKS

Today UK warship HMS Montrose, who is part of NATO's counter piracy mission, Operation Ocean Shield off the Horn of Africa, prevented a gang of suspected pirates from prowling in to the Indian Ocean to attack merchant ships.

A pirate gang consisting of ten men was seen acting suspiciously near to a known pirate camp off the coast of Somalia. Their boat, loaded with ladders and fuel drums was towing two other smaller vessels that have been traditionally used for pirate attacks against ships

HMS Montrose launched her Lynx helicopter and a boat of Royal Marines and Sailors to investigate. Once the suspected pirates spotted the helicopter and boarding team, four of the suspected pirates took one of the smaller boats and tried to head for the shore. The six remaining men stopped in the water and when the Lynx helicopter hovered overhead they attempted to discard the pirate ladders overboard.

After the navy boarding team confiscated all the pirate gear, thus ensuring that the gang could no longer pose a threat to merchantmen, they were transferred to the remaining skiff.

Speaking about the incident, Commander Jonathen Lett said "Today's disruption of a pirate gang in the Somali Basin by a NATO warship was very rewarding. Our actions prevented suspected pirates from heading out to sea to prey on innocent merchantmen. HMS Montrose continues to help keep the seas safe".

The NATO Task Force patrols the Gulf of Aden and Somali Basin as part of the international effort to counter the scourge of piracy. Despite the vastness of the ocean, counter piracy forces, such as NATO, the Combined Maritime Forces, the EU Naval Force and other independent maritime forces continue to successfully disrupt pirate activity and help safeguard merchant traffic.

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

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