

News Release



**Allied Maritime
Command Headquarters
Northwood**



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NATO WARSHIP HMS MONTROSE RACES TO ASSIST SHIP AFTER PIRATE ATTACK

Today British warship HMS Montrose came to the aid of a German owned ship - MV Beluga Fortune after she had been attacked by armed pirates in the Indian Ocean.

The Beluga Fortune sent out a '*may day*' to say that she was coming under attack, and that her crew were locking themselves in a safe room or 'citadel' to try and prevent the pirates from taking them hostage. HMS Montrose, who is part of NATO's counter piracy mission, code-named *Operation Ocean Shield*, was the closest warship, and so raced to the scene to help the terrified crew. The pirates, hearing that HMS Montrose was on her way, abandoned the ship, but not before setting fire to part of the superstructure.

As the Beluga Fortune's crew had barricaded themselves in, they were unaware if the pirates were still on board or not, and so were very relieved when a team of Royal Marines from HMS Montrose boarded the vessel this afternoon and released them from the safe room. None of the crew were injured.

The Ship's Commanding Officer Commander Jonathan Lett Royal Navy said:

"Today has shown that the adoption of anti-piracy measures by the crews of merchant vessels, combined with a rapid and offensive response by NATO can result in pirate attacks being thwarted off the Horn of Africa".

Commodore Rune who is the Commander of the NATO Counter Piracy Task Force said:

"I am delighted to see more and more merchant ships being able to use safe rooms effectively to defeat pirate attacks. The excellent preparation and implementation of anti-piracy best management practices (BMPs) by MV Beluga Fortune's crew resulted in them being able to stay safe until the NATO warship arrived. The Indian Ocean is vast and it cannot be guaranteed that a warship will be close by".

End text.

Background Information:

Standing NATO Maritime Group 1 (SNMG1)

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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Standing NATO Maritime Group 1 (SNMG1)