

News Release



**Allied Maritime
Command Headquarters
Northwood**



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NATO WARSHIP HDMS ESBERN SNARE PREVENTS PIRATE ATTACKS OFF THE COAST OF SOMALIA

LONDON: Last night Danish warship Esbern Snare, who is part of NATO's counter-piracy mission, code-named Operation Ocean Shield, disrupted a group of pirate boats 150 miles off the east coast of Somalia.

The ever watchful crew from the Danish warship had sighted the pirates, operating as a group of 2 boats, on the look-out for merchant ships to hijack. As Esbern Snare crept ever closer to the scene, a team of marines from the Danish Special Maritime Insertion Unit prepared for a night time operation to disable the pirate 'mother ship'.

When the Danish marines boarded the mother ship, the pirates on board were taken completely by surprise and quickly surrendered. The pirates were moved off the mother ship, which was carrying excess fuel and pirate equipment, to a smaller boat so that the Danish marines could disable it and so prevent it from being used in the future for acts of piracy.

"The events of last night show that NATO ships are equipped to carry out counter-piracy operations twenty four hours a day. The crew is well trained, well equipped and poised to respond immediately to any pirate threat" Captain Steen Engelbrecht Pedersen, Commanding Officer of ESBERN SNARE, said after the operation.

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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
HNLMS ZEELEEUW – The Netherlands

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