

News Release



**Headquarters Allied Maritime
Command Northwood**



Ref: SNMG2 2010 / 30

2nd August 2010

MV SUEZ PIRATED IN THE GULF OF ADEN

At approximately 0415 GMT, the container ship MV Suez reported that they were under attack by one white skiff (small boat) and shots had been fired at the motor vessel to force it to stop. The ship was reportedly employing Best Management Practices, having barbed wire in place and fire hoses ready.

Two NATO warships, HNLMS De Zeven Provinciën and USS Cole, from the NATO counter piracy task force undertaking Operation OCEAN SHIELD, and a Singaporean warship the RSS Endurance from the CMF taskforce were within forty miles of MV Suez at the time of the attack. Despite reacting immediately and having a helicopter on the scene within 10 minutes, naval forces were unable to prevent the attack as the pirates had been able to board the ship within 5 minutes.

This incident highlights that the IRTC is still an area where piracy occurs and that the presence of warships and the employment of Best Management Practices are not guarantees of immunity.

NATO Maritime Command Northwood's Chief of Staff, Rear Admiral Hank Ort commented that, "It is imperative that vessels continue to employ anti-piracy measures, maintain an effective lookout and react robustly, in order to resist pirate attacks for long enough to allow naval forces to reach the scene and intervene before the pirates are onboard."

MV Suez, a Panamanian-flagged ship with a crew of 24, was travelling eastbound through the Gulf of Aden towards the Suez Canal.

Ends

Background Information:

Standing NATO Maritime Group 2 (SNMG2)

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.

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

The NATO Task Force consists of 2 ships from Standing NATO Maritime Group 2. These are:

HNLMS DE ZEVEN PROVINCIEËN (Flagship) – The Netherlands
USS COLE – US

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Standing NATO Maritime Group 2 (SNMG2)