

News Release



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14th November 2011

International counter piracy collaboration helps NATO to foil pirates

On November 12, 2011, a successful operation between a NATO warship and a Japanese maritime patrol aircraft resulted in the location and disarming of a pirate skiff operating in the Internationally Recognised Transit Corridor (IRTC) in the Gulf of Aden. Following a boarding investigation all piracy-related equipment was confiscated by NATO to prevent the skiff from posing any further threat to international shipping.

The pirate's skiff was first detected and identified in the early morning on Saturday by a Japanese Defence Forces Maritime Patrol Aircraft (MPA) conducting a routine patrol over the IRTC and its coordinates were transmitted to all counter piracy forces in the vicinity. The Danish Frigate HDMS Absalon, who only joined NATO's operation Ocean Shield on November 1, was the closest unit to the position and was tasked to conduct a boarding of the suspect skiff.

Under the watchful eye of the ship's helicopter the suspected pirates quickly realised that the Absalon's boarding team would recognise their intent and they were observed to be throwing ladders and other pirate related equipment overboard before surrendering to the boarding team. After a thorough search of the skiff the boarding team assessed that the suspected pirates ability to conduct any further attacks was nullified and after NATO provided the crew of the skiff with enough water, food and fuel to reach to Somali Coast they were given navigational directions to the nearest land.

Along with several other nations the Japanese Defence Forces have committed Maritime Patrol Aircraft to counter piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden. MPA aircraft constitute effective assets to detect and disrupt piracy at sea by covering large areas of ocean visually and by radar searching and tracking suspected pirate vessels. This is the latest example of an aircraft working in co-operation with ships to identify and eliminate Pirate Action Groups.

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

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

NATO Forces currently in Operation Ocean Shield:

ITS Andrea Doria (Flagship) – Italy
RFA Fort Victoria - UK
USS Carney - USA
USS De Wert – USA
HDMS Absalon - Denmark
One Norwegian Navy Maritime Patrol Aircraft

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