

# News Release



**Allied Maritime  
Command  
Northwood**



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## **Turkey Assumes Command of NATO's Counter Piracy Task Force**

Yesterday, Rear Admiral Sinan Azmi TOSUN (Turkish Navy), assumed the command of Operation Ocean Shield, NATO's counter piracy force, from Rear Admiral Gualtiero MATTESI (Italian Navy) who completed a 6-month deployment in the region.

As the handover was completed, Rear Admiral Sinan Azmi TOSUN stated "I am extremely proud to take over command of such a task force from my predecessor, Rear Admiral Gualtiero MATTESI. I would like to thank Rear Admiral MATTESI and his distinguished staff for the excellent job they have done over the period of last six months. They can be really proud of having played a considerable part in contributing to the decline in pirate activity in the Gulf of Aden in recent months. We had a smooth operational handover and now we are ready to continue this important task as NATO's counter piracy Task Force. Powerful and resolute units under my command will continue to fight against piracy with the same enthusiasm in order to safeguard the merchant community on behalf of NATO during the next six-month period. I wish Rear Admiral MATTESI and his staff a safe trip back home and to their loved ones."

During their deployment RAdm Mattesi and his flagship, the ITS Andrea Doria rescued 26 members of the crew of the Motor Vessel Pacific Express which had been hijacked by pirates. Just three weeks later, the flagship freed the 18 crew of the Italian Motor Vessel Montecristo which had been pirated but which was intercepted and freed soon after. Three days later ITS Andrea Doria stopped the mother ship that launched the skiffs responsible for the attack and arrested 15 suspected pirates who are now awaiting trial in Italy.

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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 2 (SNMG2) is permanently assigned to NATO. It is a multi-national Naval Group that provides the NATO Alliance with the ability to respond quickly to crisis situations anywhere in the world. It is 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. These include non-combatant evacuations, consequence management, counter terrorism, crisis response and embargo operations. Its command rotates amongst the contributing nations and SNMG 2 is currently commanded by Rear Admiral (LH) Sinan Azmi TOSUN, Turkish Navy.

NATO Forces currently in Operation Ocean Shield:

TCG GIRESUN (Flag ship) – Turkey

HDMS ABSALON – Denmark

ITS GRECALE – Italy

RFA FORT VICTORIA – United Kingdom

USS DEWERT - United States of America

USS CARNEY - United States of America

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