

News Release



Allied Maritime
Command
Northwood
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Ref: OOS 2012 / 07

29 January 2012

NATO Commanders Visit NATO's Counter Piracy Task Force Flagship in Djibouti

London: On 27th January, Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe (DSACEUR) General Sir Richard Shirreff KCB CBE, Commander Allied Maritime Command Northwood Admiral George Zambellas DSC and Deputy Chief of Staff Operations Commodore Bruce Belliveau visited NATO's Counter Piracy Task Force Commander Rear Admiral Sinan Azmi TOSUN on board his flagship TCG GIRESUN while it was in Djibouti.

As soon as their visitors arrived on board, the flagship departed from Djibouti port and set sail for the Gulf of Aden for her scheduled counter piracy patrol duty. Although no suspicious piracy activity occurred throughout the visit, TCG GIRESUN's boarding team and Special Forces demonstrated their outstanding skills in boarding and fast rope operations during counter piracy exercise scenarios.

Admiral Zambellas said after the visit, "having the opportunity to visit the task force this early in my command has given me an excellent opportunity to see NATO's capabilities at first hand and to experience the counter piracy effort and challenges faced on a daily basis by our ships. I have been very impressed with the dedication and professionalism shown by all those in the task force."

"Today, I am very honoured to host DSACEUR, my Commander in MC Northwood and Cdre Belliveau on my flagship. This top level visit boosted our morale and motivation. I am sure it will have a positive effect on our efforts." said Rear Admiral Sinan Azmi TOSUN.

TCG Giresun spent three days in Djibouti and prior to hosting their NATO Commanders, RAdm Tosun met with his Japanese counterpart Captain Takaki Mizuma, Commander Japan Escort Division 6. The Japan Maritime Force has been contributing to the counter piracy effort off the Horn of Africa since 2009, escorting merchant vessels from different nationalities across the Gulf of Aden.

Admiral TOSUN also visited the EU's Commander of Operation Atalanta, Rear Admiral Jorge Manso on board his flagship SPS PATINO. Meetings like these are vital to maintaining cooperation between the different naval forces in their fight against piracy.

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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 – Turkey
HDMS ABSALON – Denmark
ITS GRECALE – Italy
USS DEWERT - United States of America
USS CARNEY - United States of America

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