

News Release



Maritime
Command Northwood
www.manw.nato.int



Ref: OOS 2012 / 18

6th June 2012

Royal Netherlands Navy Assumes Command of NATO's Counter Piracy Mission

Earlier today, Commodore Ben Bekkering (Royal Netherlands Navy), assumed command of Operation Ocean Shield, NATO's counter piracy mission from Rear Admiral Sinan Azmi Tosun (Turkish Navy) in the port of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

As incoming Commander, Commodore Ben Bekkering stressed the need to remain vigilant. "On Admiral Tosun's six-month watch, the success rate of pirates has seen a sharp decline. Pirates find it increasingly difficult to deploy from the coast and hunt at sea. But the many incidents over the last few months, including attacks and hijackings, make it absolutely clear that we can't let our guard down. I see it as my absolute task to ensure the trend continues and engage with all partners in the region to maximize our combined effect."

Onboard his flagship Rear Admiral Tosun summarized his six months in command, "Ocean Shield has been a highly satisfying and demanding deployment for me. During my tenure, the main success has been the significant reduction in successful piracy actions which are now at their lowest level since 2009. The high level of coordination established between the counter piracy actors has undoubtedly played a considerable part in contributing to the decline in piracy. I believe that powerful and resolute units of NATO's Counter Piracy Task Force, under the command of Commodore Bekkering will continue to fight against piracy with the same enthusiasm during the next six-month period"

TEXT ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS

- Standing NATO Maritime Group 1 (SNMG1) is a multinational maritime force that is permanently available to NATO to perform a wide range of tasks, from humanitarian assistance to higher intensity sea control operations. As such, SNMG1, together with SNMG2, provide the high readiness immediate reaction component of the NRF. In addition, both Groups are regularly deployed in NATO-operations, most notably Active Endeavour and Ocean Shield. As of next week this maritime group will take command of NATO's Counter Piracy mission, code named

'Operation Ocean Shield'. The commander of SNMG1 is commodore Ben Bekkering. He and his international staff of 24 are embarked in the Air Defence and Command frigate HNLMS Evertsen.

- By rotating the Standing Maritime Groups, a relevant and credible NATO presence can be maintained in the Gulf of Aden and around the Horn of Africa. Alongside two other task forces, one from the European Union and one from the Coalition Maritime Forces operating from Bahrain, and independent deployers from nations such as China, Russia, Japan and India, NATO's TF 508 plays an important role in the concerted international effort to ensure maritime security and stability by enabling free passage at sea

Media Inquiries only to:

Public Affairs Officer

+44 (0)1923 956763

<mailto:pio@manw.nato.int>