

News Release



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NATO and Omani Navy Help Dhow

Yesterday , HNLMS Evertsen and USS Taylor from the NATO Task Force joined with Royal Omani Navy Vessel Al Mabrukah in locating and assisting the Iranian dhow Al Mahdi, drifting in the Arabian Sea. According to the crew, the dhow had been hijacked by pirates earlier this month and was abandoned when she ran out of fuel and supplies.

The search was preceded by coordination between CTF 508, the Omani naval headquarters and the Iranian Rescue Coordination Center, after the latter had received a distress call.

Early yesterday morning, Al Mabrukah located the dhow. Deteriorating sea conditions limited the assistance options and after an attempt to tow by Al Mabrukah failed, Evertsen send her Rhib with fuel and food. A little later the dhow managed to start her engine. She is now underway to Salalah in Oman, escorted by the Omani warship. Both NATO ships are now continuing their original tasking.

“We certainly would like to know what has happened to the dhow during the last few days or even weeks,” commented commodore Bekkering, Commander Task Force 508, “but when a vessel is in distress in rather rough conditions at sea, our first attention goes to the safety of the crew. Some impressive ship and boat handling from both Al Mabrukah and Evertsen enabled the dhow to get underway again. This event proved again the sound cooperation that exists between the international navies, not just from NATO, but also from the EU, CMF and independent deployers like Oman. This event shows that in the process of counter piracy effort all of us also look at the wider maritime safety and security. I am confident that the Omani navy will look after the Al Mahdi. And again I was impressed by the quick response of and the professional cooperation with the Omani navy.”

NATO is working alongside EUNAVFOR, Combined Maritime Forces and individual nations to fight piracy. By joining forces, counter piracy efforts are more effective and can achieve more than any one ship, navy, organisation or country working alone.

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 1 is permanently 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 Allies agreed on 19 March 2012 to extend Operation Ocean Shield for a further two years until the end of 2014.

NATO Forces currently in Operation Ocean Shield:
HNLMS Evertsen (flagship) The Netherlands
USS Taylor (United States of America)

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