

# News Release



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**Maritime  
Command  
Northwood**  
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## Change of Command for NATO Group

Yesterday, in Taranto Naval Base, Italy Rear Admiral Gualtiero Mattesi (ITA N) handed over Command of the Standing NATO Maritime Group One to Commodore Ben Bekkering (NLD N).

The Ceremony took place on board of the former flagship, ITS Andrea Doria and was presided over by the Deputy Commander of Maritime Command Northwood, Vice Admiral Hans-Jochen Witthauer. Platoons from ITS Andrea Doria as well as from the incoming ships, HMNLS De Ruyter (the Netherlands), FGS Rhoen (Germany) and HCMS Charlottetown (Canada) were in attendance.

During his command, Rear Admiral Mattesi was the Task Force Commander of the Maritime Forces in Operation Unified Protector NATO's mission during the Libya crisis and was Commander of NATO's counter piracy task force in the Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean, Operation Ocean Shield.

It has been "a year full of intense experiences, operating in accordance with NATO's mandate, to maintain the freedom of the sea line of communication, to protect merchant shipping and defend from the sea the civilian population. The last nine months have been spent in live operations, directing more than fifty warships

## Standing NATO Maritime Group 1 (SNMG1)

belonging to fifteen different nations” said Rear Admiral Mattesi during the Ceremony.

As Commodore Bekkering stated in his speech, “I see my new job as a tremendous challenge. The programme ahead of us is varied and high-paced. It brings us to the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic and Indian Oceans for both operations and exercises. The importance of the sea for our economy and security underlines the relevance of this task. It is therefore that I accept the challenge with great enthusiasm and motivation”.

Commodore Bekkering will embark on HMNLS De Ruyter as his flagship and will start Force Integration Training with the ships assigned to the force, preparing for future tasks.

*Ends*

### **Notes to editors**

Standing NATO Maritime Group 1 (SNMG1) is permanently assigned to NATO. It is a multinational 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.

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