

News Release



Allied Maritime Command Northwood

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NATO's Mine Hunters Make the Sea Safer in Danish Waters

Whilst on NATO's Brilliant Mariner exercise, Danish Minehunter Makrelen made the seas off Denmark safer this weekend by locating a World War II mine. The mine, which is believed to be a UK Mark I/IV ground mine was found in the sea at a depth of 18 metres, lying in close proximity to an underwater communications cable.

Visual sighting of the mine was made with sophisticated inspection equipment while the ship was exercising with NATO's two standing Mine Countermeasures groups, along with a number of mine hunters from Norway and Sweden. Several exercise mines had been laid in the same area and HDMS Makrelen had already found four of these exercise mines using sonar and their underwater vehicles. Speaking about locating the WWII mine, Mine Warfare Officer, Lt Cdr Mette Stab-Neilsen said, "With our sophisticated minehunting capability, the crew of Makrelen are very happy to have, once again, contributed to making the sea a safer place for all".

Normally a mine such as this would be blown up with explosives using authorised safety regulations, but due to the proximity of the underwater communications cable, further investigations are required. The mine position has been reported to Danish authorities, who will take further action. Lt Cdr Stab-Neilsen explained, "These old mines are not dangerous while resting on the seabed, but the explosives inside can become unstable with age and corrosion. This can cause a danger to fisherman who accidentally dredge a mine and bring it to the surface."

During World War I and II many mines were laid in Danish waters by both sides especially around Sejerøe Bight. The Danish authorities still regularly receive reports from fishermen getting them caught in their nets.

As part of Brilliant Mariner, exercise tasking has included ensuring safe channels are available for shipping around the region's ports and harbours, keeping sea lanes open, guarding the ports and generally ensuring a safe environment for all seafarers within a complex political/military simulated scenario that is controlled by directing staff back at the NATO Maritime Headquarters in the UK.

Lt Kaare Iverson, 34, is a Norwegian Naval Officer under Command training. Speaking about the role of the MCMs in the exercise he said "NATO's Mine countermeasures capability is capable of providing maritime security and ensure safe passage of maritime trade wherever and whenever the NATO Force Commander send us. We've had a busy, challenging time out at sea this week. It has been ideal weather for this mission, decent visibility for the diving teams and it will get more challenging next week as we enter the 'free play' part of the exercise".

The underwater pictures of the WWII mine were taken from the camera on the underwater inspection vehicle SAAB Double Eagle MK II S.

Ends

Notes to editors:

1. The Allied Press Information Centre for NATO Exercise Brilliant Mariner 2010 is located Frederikshavn, Denmark from 13 – 22 April. Media enquiries regarding this Exercise can be dealt with by NATO Press Officers at +447769628843 or via: heather.lane860@gmail.com
2. A large fleet of warships, submarines and auxiliary vessels from NATO's Response Force (NRF) sailed from ports across Europe on 12 April to take part in "Brilliant Mariner". The ships and submarines are conducting integration training which will enable them to respond to operations or crisis situations any where in the world should they be required. The exercise will end on 22 April 2010 and will be operating in Northern European waters.
3. 6,500 military personnel from 10 NATO nations are taking part. France has provided the Command Staff for this 2010 NRF Command rotation with Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Spain, UK and USA) also participating, together with one Partnership for Peace country, Sweden. The exercise involves up to 31 warships, 4 submarines and 28 aircraft. *Understandably the aircraft assigned to Brilliant Mariner 10 are currently not flying due to the flying restrictions as a result of the volcanic ash cloud. They will only start flying when it is safe to do so.*
4. Exercise Brilliant Mariner is coordinated by the staff of the Allied Maritime Command, Northwood, London, incorporating a realistic exercise scenario presenting a number of realistic challenges for the commanders at sea, including asymmetric or terrorist threats, maritime security operations and embargo operations.
5. Further information regarding Allied Maritime Command Northwood is available via email pio@manw.nato.int. Exercise Website: http://www.manw.nato.int/page_Brilliant_mariner_home_page.aspx