

News Release



**Allied Maritime
Command Headquarters
Northwood**



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NATO WARSHIP FORCES PIRATES TO ABANDON ATTACK

During the early hours of yesterday morning the master of bulk carrier MV Carmencita put out a may-day call to say his ship was being attacked by a group of pirates in the Indian Ocean.

Danish warship Esbern Snare – the flag ship for NATO's counter piracy operation, 'Ocean Shield' responded immediately by launching her helicopter to over fly the scene and let the pirates know that a NATO warship was on her way to assist the terrified crew.

The master relayed to HDMS Esbern Snare that his crew would be going to their safe room, while he tried to use evasion techniques to fend off the attackers - who had fired rocket propelled grenades and AK-47 gunfire at the ship.

The pirates broke off the attack and fled in their small attack skiffs towards a larger dhow, which had previously been hijacked with hostages on board, and was now being used as a supply 'mother ship'. The pirates dragged one of the attack skiffs onboard the mother ship, and took the second skiff under tow.

During the day Esbern Snare shadowed the pirated dhow to ensure the pirates were not able to attack other ships, and last night, under the cover of darkness, a boarding team from Esbern Snare seized the attack skiff that was being towed behind. Unable to now carry out coordinated attacks, the pirates returned to the Somali coast. The seized attack skiff was subsequently destroyed by Esbern Snare's crew.

"Tonight NATO sent a clear message to the pirates; we are watching and we will exploit every mistake. We have a counter piracy mandate and will utilise all the options within that mandate to prevent pirates from hijacking ships and exposing the crews to their inhumane treatment." Captain Steen Engelbrecht Pedersen, Royal Danish Navy, Commanding Officer of ESBERN SNARE said.

----TEXT ENDS----

Standing NATO Maritime Group 1 (SNMG1)

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 Forces currently in Operation Ocean Shield:

HDMS ESBERN SNARE (Flagship) - Denmark
USS KAUFFMAN – United States of America
USS LABOON - United States of America
HMS MONTROSE – United Kingdom
RFA FORT VICTORIA (With a Royal Marines boarding team embarked) – United Kingdom
ITS BERSAGLIERE – Italy
HNLMS AMSTERDAM - Netherlands

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