

# News Release



**Allied Maritime  
Command Headquarters  
Northwood**



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## **NATO WARSHIP FREES CREW AFTER ATTACK BY PIRATES**

This morning Dutch warship HNLMS De Ruyter, part of NATO's counter piracy operation Ocean Shield, freed the crew from merchant vessel *New York Star* after they had barricaded themselves in to a 'safe room' (known as a citadel), when their ship came under attack by pirates yesterday.

As the pirates climbed on board, the master of the *New York Star* was able to put out a *may day* call, which was picked up by an Australian maritime patrol aircraft (MPA), who was on counter piracy patrol in the area. The Australian aircraft broadcast a loud message to the pirates, announcing that warships were on the way to the scene. After that they observed the pirates leaving the *New York Star*, only to return with tools to try and quickly gain control over the merchant vessel before the warships arrived. Using Rocket Propelled Grenades (RPGs) they tried, unsuccessfully, to blow their way in to the citadel.

HNLMS De Ruyter was patrolling the Arabian Sea when the distress call from the *New York Star* came in. Travelling at maximum speed, she covered almost 600 nautical miles in 22 hours and all the time, De Ruyter's commanding officer, Commander Richard Keulen remained in contact with the ship's master, via email.

As De Ruyter closed in, her helicopter was sent ahead to over fly the merchant ship. The helicopter crew observed that the pirates had abandoned their attack and fled the scene. In a coordinated response with Russian Federation warship Admiral Vinogradov, and another Australian MPA, the Special Forces team from HNLMS De Ruyter boarded the *New York Star* and freed the relieved crew.

After a thorough search, and after checking that the crew were well, it was agreed that Russian warship Admiral Vinogradov would escort the *New York Star* out of the area. HNLMS De Ruyter is now continuing her counter piracy patrols in the Arabian Sea.

Speaking about the incident, Commodore Hijmans, the Commander of NATO's counter piracy task force, said "I am very happy that NATO warship De Ruyter was able to assist the crew of *New York Star* today. It helped that the crew was able to react quickly, and having made good preparations, was able to keep in constant contact with De Ruyter. The coordination and cooperation between the different maritime aircraft and warships from the various task forces and nations also worked very effectively. The *New York Star* crew can now return to their families safe and I wish them well".

**Standing NATO Maritime Group 2 (SNMG2)**

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**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 2 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 has announced its continuing commitment to counter-piracy by extending Operation Ocean Shield to December 2012.

NATO Forces currently in Operation Ocean Shield:

HNLMS DE RUYTER (Flagship) - Netherlands  
USS BAINBRIDGE - United States of America  
HDMS ESBERN SNARE - Denmark  
USS HALYBURTON – United States of America  
TCG GIRESUN – Turkey

**Media Inquiries only to:**

Public Affairs Officer

+44 (0)1923 956763

+44 (0) 7747 008508

<mailto:pio@manw.nato.int>

FACEBOOK Group: CTF 508 Operation OCEAN SHIELD

**Standing NATO Maritime Group 2 (SNMG2)**