

News Release



**Allied Maritime
Command Headquarters
Northwood**
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NATO WARSHIP ASSISTS SHIP AFTER PIRATE ATTACK IN ARABIAN SEA

Turkish warship TCG Gaziantep - part of the NATO's counter piracy mission, Operation Ocean Shield, boarded and searched Motor Vessel (MV) Leopard after it had been attacked by armed pirates.

In the afternoon of January 12th MV Leopard was attacked by two pirate skiffs. As the pirates fired small calibre weapons, the crew retreated to a secure area in the ship known as a 'citadel'.

A Japanese maritime patrol aircraft soon arrived at the scene and established communications with the crew. In a short message the master of MV Leopard informed the Japanese aircraft that armed pirates were on board. In the meantime TCG Gaziantep, who was about 250 nautical miles away, was tasked to steam to the position of MV Leopard.

As TCG Gaziantep approached the area, her helicopter over flew MV Leopard, however, there was no sign of the crew or the pirates on board. The Turkish boarding team subsequently searched the ship and it became clear that the pirates had left, and, having taken the 6 man crew with them, boarded a pirate 'mother ship'.

The crew of the NATO warship is now guarding MV Leopard, ensuring it remains navigationally safe, whilst arrangements are being made to transport it back to port.

----TEXT ENDS----

Standing NATO Maritime Group 2 (SNMG2)

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. Its command rotates amongst the contributing countries and is currently commanded by Commodore Michiel B. Hijmans, Royal Netherlands Navy

NATO Forces currently in Operation Ocean Shield:

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

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