

News Release



**Maritime
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NATO Warship Disrupts Another Pirate Ship

RFA Fort Victoria, part of NATO's counter piracy task force Operation Ocean Shield has successfully disrupted a suspected pirate vessel looking to launch attacks on merchant vessels transiting through the Gulf of Aden.

On Thursday 12 January, USS Carney also part of Operation Ocean Shield discovered and tracked a suspected pirate vessel. Early on Friday 13th January, RFA Fort Victoria along with her embarked helicopter was tasked to intercept the suspected pirate vessel. At first light, Fort Victoria launched her helicopter to investigate the suspected pirate vessel. In order to stop the vessel, the helicopter fired several rounds of various warning shots.

A Royal Marines boarding team in fast boats approached the vessel and successfully boarded it. Shortly after the Marines approached, the pirates surrendered moving to the front of their ship with their hands up. A thorough search of the vessel revealed numerous weapons including RPG launchers and machine guns.

At this time the suspected pirates are still on the vessel and investigations are still ongoing to determine whether there is sufficient evidence for prosecution.

This is the third successful disruption of a pirate action group operating from a pirated mothership in the last seven days. This demonstrates NATO's capability to track and stop target vessels by using information from the various maritime counter piracy forces operating in the area.

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-

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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:

TCG Giresun (Flagship) - Turkey
USS Carney - USA
USS De Wert – USA
RFA Fort Victoria – UK
HDMS Absalon – Denmark
Challenger 640 Aircraft - Denmark

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