

News Release



**Allied Maritime
Command Headquarters
Northwood**
www.manw.nato.int



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East and West meet in the middle

London: Yesterday Commodore Michiel Hijmans, commander of the NATO counter piracy task force, Operation Ocean Shield visited the commander of the Indian ship INS Ganga, Captain Prakash, which is in the area conducting merchant ship convoys.

After a quick transfer by sea boats Captain Prakash welcomed the NATO delegation on board the INS Ganga. India has been conducting counter piracy operations since August 2008 and has safely escorted all ships in their convoys.

After an exchange of briefings and a ship's tour, the programme allowed for open discussion and that opportunity was eagerly used. Captain Prakash expressed his concerns on piracy shifting east, away from the Gulf of Aden and more towards Indian territorial waters.

"The good cooperation with India is very beneficial, they have carried out exercises with many other navies recently and they have great interests in the Indian Ocean. They have shown themselves to be very capable and successful in their counter piracy operations." Commodore Hijmans said after the visit.

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 (SNMG2) is permanently assigned to NATO. It is a multi-national Naval Group that provides the NATO Alliance with the ability to respond quickly to crisis situations anywhere in the world. It is 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. These include non-combatant evacuations, consequence management, counter terrorism, crisis response and embargo operations. Its command rotates amongst the contributing nations and SNMG 2 is currently commanded by Commodore Michiel B. Hijmans, Royal Netherlands Navy.

Standing NATO Maritime Group 2 (SNMG2)

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

NATO Forces currently in Operation Ocean Shield:

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

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