

News Release



Allied Maritime
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www.manw.nato.int



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NATO'S latest counter piracy weapon strikes early blow

London: Yesterday in a coordinated action between NATO's Maritime Patrol and Reconnaissance Aircraft (MPRA) and Naval forces, armed pirates were stopped at sea and had their piracy equipment taken off them, preventing them from attacking innocent merchant ships.

Recently deployed to the Seychelles by Portugal in direct support of Operation OCEAN SHIELD, NATO's Counter Piracy mission off Somalia, and flying only its 5th sortie the P3 Orion MPRA observed a suspicious pirate whaler approximately 80 miles from shore. The vessel was loaded with fuel and towing two attack skiffs - a common pirate configuration. When the suspected pirates saw the NATO aircraft they manned the two skiffs which then raced away. In a classic coordinated military operation the Danish warship Esbern Snare, which was 120 miles away, was vectored onto the scene and tasked to investigate. As the warship approached the area, her helicopter was sent on ahead to locate the pirate mothership, known as a 'whaler' - which it soon did. The helicopter was then tasked to provide airborne cover while an armed boarding team from HDMS Esbern Snare searched the whaler. They found that the whaler had enough fuel on board to reach the main sea lanes and supply the smaller attack skiffs used to hijack ships. During the search the crew of the whaler were interviewed. Their stories varied and conflicted considerably and it was clear that they had been involved in, or were intending to conduct pirate activity. The decision was made to destroy the whaler to prevent the men from preying on shipping, and after further questioning they were landed safely back to the coast of Somalia.

Commodore Bruce Belliveau, Deputy Chief Of Staff Operations in Maritime Command Northwood, the tactical HQ for OCEAN SHIELD, said "The addition of a dedicated MPRA asset providing surface search to support Op OCEAN SHIELD gives us additional reach into areas our intelligence

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analysis has identified as being a key route for pirates either into their operating areas or for resupply of Pirate Action Groups at sea and this decisive action has shown the pirates that our intent to keep the pressure on them is not diminishing.”

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Background Information:

NATO has contributed to the international counter piracy effort off the Horn of Africa and Somali Basin 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 TROMP (Flagship) - Netherlands
USS BAINBRIDGE - United States of America
HDMS ESBERN SNARE - Denmark
TCG GIRESUN – Turkey
USS STEPHEN W GROVES – Unites States of America
PRT P3 Orion MPRA

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