

News Release



**Allied Maritime
Command Headquarters
Northwood**



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NATO Warship RFA Fort Victoria Disrupts Pirates

LONDON: Yesterday while patrolling the West Indian Ocean between the Somali Coast and the Seychelles, the bridge crew on the UK ship, RFA FORT VICTORIA received a call from a Seychelles fishing vessel that had sighted a possible pirate vessel. The fishing vessel had spotted a suspicious vessel with an unusually large crew and a skiff onboard. FORT VICTORIA intercepted the suspicious vessel and identified it as being a whaler often used by pirates in the Indian Ocean. Therefore it was decided to board the whaler and investigate further.

When the boarding teams approached the whaler, they reported seeing 10 persons onboard and a pirate ladder to board merchant vessels. During a search of the whaler, ammunition was found. The location of piracy related paraphernalia led to the decision to embark the suspected pirates and their equipment and vessels.

Upon questioning, the suspected pirates admitted to have thrown their weapons overboard as FORT VICTORIA approached. They claimed to have been at sea for 45 days. Their engines had failed, their food had run out and they were using their boarding ladder, as a mast for a makeshift sail – their only means of propulsion and safety.

The remainder of the piracy related paraphernalia was confiscated along with their vessels, and the pirates were subsequently released to the Somali coast.

“The combined actions of all onboard have saved merchant ships from being pirated and made the area just a little safer today. In many ways the pirates were lucky that we that we found them as they would not have survived indefinitely however, most importantly, we have removed one more pirate group from the Somali Basin and destroyed their whaler so it cannot be used again” said Captain Rob Dorey, Commanding Officer of RFA FORT VICTORIA.

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Standing NATO Maritime Group 1 (SNMG1)

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-combatant evacuations, consequence management, counter terrorism, crisis response, embargo operations, etc.

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

NATO Task Forces currently in Operation Ocean Shield:

HDMS ESBERN SNARE (Flagship) - Denmark
USS KAUFFMAN – United States of America
USS LABOON - United States of America
HMS MONTROSE – United Kingdom
RFA FORT VICTORIA – United Kingdom
ITS BERSAGLIERE – Italy
HNLMS ZEELEEUW – The Netherlands

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