

News Release



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NATO and Chinese Navy Counter Piracy Commanders Welcome Opportunity To Meet in Arabian Sea

London: At the weekend the Commander of NATO forces conducting counter piracy operation *Ocean Shield* - Commodore Michiel Hijmans (Royal Netherlands Navy), welcomed the opportunity to visit Rear Admiral Zhan Huachen, on board his Chinese navy flag ship, FFG Zhoushan.

The NATO flagship, HNLMS De Ruyter, was sailing south having previously been suppressing pirate mother ships in the north Arabian Sea, and as the Chinese flag ship was close by, waiting to convoy merchant ships in the Gulf of Aden in order to protect them from pirate gangs, the navy commanders took the opportunity to rendezvous at sea.

The Chinese Navy has been contributing to the international counter piracy effort since 2008, escorting convoys through the Gulf of Aden.

Admiral Zhan Huachen welcomed Commodore Hijmans and his delegation to his flag ship and spoke warmly of recent bilateral meetings with NATO nations and the Chinese Navy which have helped to enhance international cooperation in the fight against piracy. After a presentation, the two navy commanders and their delegations held open and frank discussions on how to keep up the fight against piracy at sea. Commodore Hijmans and his team were then given a tour of the Chinese flag ship, before they returned to HNLMS De Ruyter.

Speaking about his visit to the Chinese flag ship, Commodore Hijmans said "I am delighted to have met Rear Admiral Huachen and his crew. It really was a first class opportunity to talk openly about the immense challenges we face in fighting the scourge of piracy, and the already evident benefits we reap when the international community works together. I look forward to ever closer cooperation in the future".

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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.

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

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