

News Release



Allied Maritime
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26 April 2011

NATO Warship Destroys Pirate Assets

London: On Sunday US warship, USS Stephen W. Groves, operating as part of NATO's counter piracy mission - Operation Ocean Shield, fired upon two unmanned pirate skiffs that were being towed by the previously pirated vessel Jih Chun Tsai 68.

Operating approximately 100 miles off the coast of Somalia, the NATO warship had successfully intercepted two pirated motor vessels - MV Zirku and MV Rosalia D'amato, and followed the vessels as they headed towards the Somali coast.

The pirated mothership Jih Chun Tsai 68 was tethered to the Rosalia D'Amato and two skiffs were also being towed behind. The NATO warship ordered the pirates to cut loose the mother ship and skiffs. As the pirates did not comply, warning shots were fired, and when they too were ignored, the unmanned skiffs were destroyed. Later, as the USS Stephen Groves moved in closer to the MV Rosalia D'Amato the pirates opened fire on the naval vessel. After returning fire to defend itself, the warship opened to a distance in order to de-escalate the situation and not endanger the innocent hostages on board the pirated ships.

As the two hijacked merchant vessels moved in to a known pirate anchorage, another Merchant Vessel - MV Renuar which had just been released by pirates was making preparations to leave the area. NATO warship USS Bainbridge boarded MV Renuar to check on the relieved crew, and then USS Stephen Groves escorted the merchant vessel safely clear of the anchorage and away from the Somali coast. USS Bainbridge meanwhile keeps monitoring the activity on the coast.

Standing NATO Maritime Group 2 (SNMG2)

Commander Matthew Rick, Commanding Officer of USS Stephen W Groves, was pleased with the crew's performance "The crew carried out the ship's tasking in a professional and precise manner. We've trained and prepared for these operations, and we stand ready to counter piracy in the waters off the Somali Coast".

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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 TROMP (Flagship) - Netherlands
USS BAINBRIDGE - United States of America
HDMS ESBERN SNARE - Denmark
TCG GIRESUN – Turkey
USS STEPHEN W GROVES – Unites States of America

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