

News Release



**Allied Maritime
Command
Northwood**



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NATO Task Force Neutralises Two Pirate Mother Ships

Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean: Over the last 3 days in two separate operations Units of NATO'S Counter Piracy Task Force 508 successfully identified and neutralised two ocean going dhows that had been pirated and were subsequently being used as mother ships from which Somali pirates were intending to launch attacks on merchant shipping in the sea lanes off Somalia and the southern Arabian coasts.

In the first incident on Friday 6th January the USS CARNEY acting on intelligence from other counter piracy forces intercepted the Indian flagged dhow AL QASHMI off the south western coast of Oman. Following the dhow until it was safe to intercept her, the USS CARNEY carried out a text book approach to persuade the suspected pirates that they should stop and allow a compliant boarding of the dhow. Once onboard the dhow the USS CARNEY'S Board and Search Team quickly discovered that all evidence of potential piracy had been disposed of and questioning of the dhow's crew revealed that they had been hijacked with the 9 suspected pirates launching from a different dhow. The suspected pirates were released into their own boats and given sufficient fuel, provisions and water to make the passage back to Somalia. The crew of the AL QASHMI were offered assistance and then allowed to go about their lawful business.

The second incident took place on Saturday 7th January several hundred nautical miles away to the south west and close to the Somali coast when another dhow, this time of Iranian nationality, was identified as a potential pirate mother ship by the Danish warship HDMS ABSALON.

Having tracked the dhow through the night at first light the ABSALON launched her helicopter and confirmed that the dhow was carrying fast boats that were unusual to that type of dhow but of the type widely used by pirates. ABSALON then closed the dhow to hail it but instead of stopping as requested it turned towards the Somali coast. In order to force compliance ABSALON used warning shots to bring the dhow to a stop.

ABSALON'S Board and Search Team was all ready to launch and were quickly dispatched to the dhow under cover of the helicopter before the suspected pirates were able to dispose of potential evidence linking them to piracy and this was subsequently seized along with the 25 suspected pirates. The Boarding Team found 14 crew members, 5 Iranian nationals and 9 from Pakistan who were taken aboard the ABSALON to be interviewed and for medical checks though there were no injuries sustained in the use of warning shots or during the boarding operation.

The 25 suspected pirates have been detained onboard HDMS ABSALON pending further investigation and to ascertain if they can be prosecuted and a decision on that will be made in the next few days. The dhow's crew were given access to phone calls so they could give their relatives the good news of their release and they will also now be able to continue their voyage.

Commenting on a very busy few days for his Task Force, Rear Admiral (LH) Sinan Azmi TOSUN, Commander of NATO Counter Piracy Task Force 508 said "With these two disruptions overlapping and many miles apart NATO's Counter Piracy Task Force has demonstrated its flexibility, reach, resolve and capability to work with other counter piracy agencies to provide security on the sea lanes of this large ocean. Within the last two days NATO has disrupted two piracy-related dhows with a total of 34 suspected Somali pirates now unable to engage in unlawful acts on the high seas. This is a severe loss of capability for the pirate organisers and I congratulate my units on a job well done."

-TEXT ENDS-

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 Rear Admiral (LH) Sinan Azmi TOSUN, Turkish Navy.

NATO Forces currently in Operation Ocean Shield:

TCG GIRESUN – Turkey

HDMS ABSALON – Denmark

RFA FORT VICTORIA – United Kingdom

USS DEWERT - United States of America

USS CARNEY - United States of America

Maritime Patrol & Reconnaissance aircraft - Denmark

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