

News Release



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NATO and China Meet in Gulf of Aden

Yesterday, NATO and China met in the Gulf of Aden, where Commodore Ben Bekkering welcomed his Chinese counterpart, Rear Admiral Zhou Xuming onboard NATO's counter piracy flagship, HNLMS Rotterdam.

"International cooperation is the key to success", explains Bekkering. "With so many navies - NATO, EUNAVFOR, CMF and individual nations, unity by coordination is vital. This meeting, between two of the major contributors of the counter piracy effort is just one of the coordination tools. An important tool though, where we were able to truly exchange views and thoughts."

After informative briefings from both Task Forces, the delegations engaged in an open discussion on the subject of counter piracy. The briefings clearly underlined the impressive track record the Chinese convoy escort holds: nearly 5000 ships in almost 500 convoys have been safely escorted in recent years, without a single attack. Another topic discussed was the recent disruption of a hijacked Pakistani dhow. It allowed an exchange of experiences in the search and disruption of pirated dhows.

An extensive tour completed the visit. RADM Xuming was genuinely impressed by the joint and combined aspect of the flagship with 350 crewmembers, from all services and from 8 countries, manning an array of capabilities, from surgical medical teams to Cougar-helicopters. Before disembarking RADM Xuming stated: "This has been a very beneficial visit. The discussions deepen our mutual understanding. I have invited Commodore Bekkering to my flagship to maintain momentum of our cooperation and coordination." An invitation Commodore Bekkering readily accepted.

NATO is working alongside EUNAVFOR, Combined Maritime Forces and individual nations to fight piracy. By joining forces, counter piracy efforts are more effective and can achieve more than any one ship, navy, organisation or country working alone.

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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 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.

HNLMS Rotterdam is flagship of NATO Task Force 508 and is sailing in the Gulf of Aden in order to execute operation Ocean Shield, NATO's contribution in the international counter piracy effort off the Horn of Africa.

NATO Allies agreed on 19 March 2012 to extend Operation Ocean Shield for a further two years until the end of 2014.

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