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New Counter-Piracy Task Force Established Commander, Combined Maritime Forces Public Affairs

MANAMA, Bahrain - The Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) has established Combined Task Force 151 (CTF-151) specifically for counter-piracy operations.

Naval ships and assets from more than 20 nations comprise the Combined Maritime Forces. U.S. Navy Rear Admiral Terence "Terry" McKnight has been named the commander of the new task force which will be fully operational by the middle of January.

The CMF created the Maritime Security Patrol Area (MSPA) in the Gulf of Aden in August of 2008 to support international efforts to combat piracy.

Coalition efforts included CTF-150 assets patrolling the area with ships and aircraft. However, the charter for CTF-150, established at the outset of Operation Enduring Freedom, was for the conduct of Maritime Security Operations (MSO) in the Gulf of Aden, the Gulf of Oman, the Arabian Sea, Red Sea and the Indian Ocean.

Operations included the deterrence of destabilizing activities, such as drug smuggling and weapons trafficking. The establishment of CTF-151 will allow CTF-150 assets to remain focused on those activities, giving CTF-151 the ability to focus solely on the counter-piracy mission.

"Some navies in our coalition did not have the authority to conduct counter-piracy missions," said Vice Adm, Bill Gortney, CMF Commander. "The establishment of CTF-151 will allow those nations to operate under the auspices of CTF-150, while allowing other nations to join CTF-151 to support our goal of deterring, disrupting and eventually bringing to justice the maritime criminals involved in piracy events."

Vice Adm. Gortney highlighted the reduction in piracies in the region due to merchant mariners' proactive measures. He also continued to caution that the efforts of Coalition and international navies won't solve the problem of piracy.

"The most effective measures we've seen to defeat piracy are non-kinetic and defensive in nature. The merchant ships have been doing a great job stepping up and utilizing these methods to defeat piracy attempts. That's a great first step. But the problem of piracy is and continues to be a problem that begins ashore and is an international problem that requires an international solution. We believe the establishment of CTF-151 is a significant step in the right direction."

CTF 151 is a multinational task force that conducts counter-piracy operations in and around the Gulf of Aden, Arabian Sea, Indian Ocean and the Red Sea and was established to create a lawful maritime order and develop security in the maritime environment.

Very Respectfully,

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