

News Release



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NATO MARITIME COMMANDER WARNS AGAINST COMPLACENCY FOLLOWING LAST WEEK'S SUCCESSFUL NATO ACTION AGAINST PIRATES

Following the successful interdiction and capture of seven Somali pirates by NATO maritime forces at the end of last week, Vice Admiral Christian Canova French Navy and new Deputy Commander NATO Maritime Command in north west London, said that 'while we welcome this success we must not allow any tactical gains we make to lead to complacency. All of us who ply these waters, whether merchant or military must maintain vigilance.'

Elaborating on NATO's success, Admiral Canova said that this capture followed the first sighting of a suspect pirate vessel in the Somali Basin for a number of months and it has coincided with the end of the monsoon season which traditionally has seen an upsurge in pirate activity. 'In this instance the ROTTERDAM dealt with the threat in a timely and decisive manner and this will send a very clear message to other would be pirates that the international community is united against this scourge and the risks to you increasingly outweigh any potential gains.'

The NATO flagship HMNLS ROTTERDAM apprehended the seven pirates in the early hours of Thursday morning while the pirates were attempting to capture the Spanish Fishing vessel Izurdia. Since their capture the pirates have been held on board ROTTERDAM. Commodore Bekerring, who is commanding Task Force 508, said the Spanish authorities have now agreed to take 6 of the seven pirates into custody where they will be brought to justice while one, a minor, will be returned to Somalia. Bekerring said that he welcomed Spain's proactive stance as this will advance the process of transferring pirates to timely and efficient justice.

HMNLS ROTTERDAM, flagship of NATO Task Force 508, continued her patrol as part of Operation Ocean Shield, NATO's contribution to the international anti-piracy effort in the waters around the Horn of Africa. On board there are about 350 sailors, soldiers and airmen from all three armed services and an international staff from seven NATO countries.

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.

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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