

News Release



**Maritime
Command
Northwood**
www.manw.nato.int



Ref: OOS 2012 / 43

18th December 2012

No Christmas Holiday for Somali Pirates

NATO is urging the merchant shipping community not to lower their guard or preparation over the Christmas period as the pirates operating in the Indian Ocean and surrounding waters will not be taking a holiday. The recent attack (16th December) on the MV Torm Kristina proves that the pirates are still on the lookout for targets.

Vice Admiral Christian Canova, Deputy Commander at NATO's Maritime Headquarters in Northwood said, "Piracy in the Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean is at its lowest point since 2008 and this is good news, however we cannot be complacent. The weekend's attack on the MV Torm Kristina shows that the pirates are active and are able to operate at great distances from the Somali coast. NATO and her maritime partners are still patrolling and disrupting pirate activity, however, the merchant community have their role to play and should continue to ensure that vessels implement Best Management Practices (BMPs) and are prepared to repel pirate attacks."

Best Management Practices (BMP4) provides useful updates to masters in implementing ship protection measures to deter piracy. The publication is designed in a well-organised layout with clear definitions of terminology and procedures. BMP4 can be downloaded from the NATO Shipping Centre website www.shipping.nato.int where you will find information about the latest pirate attacks and where they occurred.

All international vessels transiting the area are encouraged to register with the UK's Maritime Trade Organisation (UKMTO), based in Dubai and the EU's Maritime Security Centre Horn of Africa (MSCHOA), London so that their transits can be monitored and any incidents quickly reported by the master of the vessel.

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.

The NATO Shipping Centre (NSC) is the link between NATO naval forces and the merchant shipping community. Permanently manned by NATO, the NSC is the primary point of contact for the exchange of merchant shipping information between NATO's military authorities and the international shipping community. The NSC is part of the Allied Maritime Command Headquarters Northwood in the UK.

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

NATO Forces currently in Operation Ocean Shield:

- ~ **ITS SAN MARCO** – Flag Ship (ITALY)
- ~ **HDMS IVER HUITFELDT** (DENMARK)
- ~ **USS HALYBURTON** (UNITED STATES)
- ~ **TCG GOKOVA** (TURKEY)

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