

News Release



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NATO Fights Somali Piracy Nearer the Coast

This week, the ships of NATO's counter piracy task force have been busy visiting local and regional mariners. Using their rigid hull inflatable boats, boarding teams from HNLMS ROTTERDAM, HDMS IVER HUITFELDT and USS HALYBURTON liaised with the dhows and skiffs to exchange information.

Naval patrols, armed security guards and best management practices on merchant ships are often stated as the reasons for the reduced number of pirate attacks and hijacks, however, to discourage pirates from going to sea in the first place the task force is moving into the coastal waters of Somalia.

Commodore Ben Bekkering, Commander of the task force explains;

"We know the pirates find it increasingly difficult to remain undetected at sea for a long time. Yet, there they can still pose a threat. By moving closer inshore, making ourselves known, contacting the locals and showing the mariners, fishermen and traders alike that we are there to ensure maritime security for all, we aim to make it very difficult for the pirates to go to sea in the first place."

The visits to dhows and their crews are a key instrument in this containment off the coast as they deter pirates, and reassure local villagers and fishermen. The commanding officer of USS Halyburton, Commander Bertram C. Hodge describes it as follows, "Many of my crewmembers are in their third counter piracy deployment. They hear the reports of declining piracy numbers. By being close to the coast, seeing the landscape, meeting fishermen at sea and exchanging experiences they not only have a real sense, but also a confirmation that their efforts are making a difference."

NATO's Task Force will continue to operate along the coast as much as possible, engaging with local and regional seafarers. Other initiatives such as meetings with elders and conducting medical visits in landing

craft just offshore, can be used to expand the reach and effects of the counter piracy effort and limit pirate action groups in their ability to deploy.

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.

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:
HNLMS Rotterdam (flagship) The Netherlands
USS Halyburton (United States of America)
HDMS Iver Huitfeldt (Denmark)

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