

# News Release



**Maritime  
Command  
Northwood**  
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## **NATO Flagship Participates in Regional Counter Piracy Exercise**

This week the NATO flagship, HNLMS Rotterdam has been participating in Exercise Cutlass Express which allows regional, Indian Ocean navies to develop their counter piracy procedures. This US-led exercise is an annual event.

The exercise began with a series of roleplay situations allowing teams from the Tanzanian and Mozambican navies to train and develop their boarding techniques and skills. They work alongside sailors and marines from the US and the Netherlands exchanging information, discussing experiences and learning through on the job training.

Commodore Ben Bekkering, commander of NATO's counter piracy task force explains, "Maritime security is key to maritime trade and maritime trade is what keeps the global economy ticking. Since the global economy is a shared interest, so is maritime security. This US-sponsored exercise allows me to deploy HNLMS Rotterdam to conduct regional maritime capacity building within our busy counter piracy patrol scheme."

Working with and learning from regional partners such as Tanzania and Mozambique increases the regional and international capacity to deal with maritime security threats and risk, of which piracy is certainly one of the most prominent.

"Training with maritime professionals, improving maritime infrastructure, promoting maritime domain awareness and reassuring the communities are the key pillars of the NATO task force's maritime capacity building," explains Major Richard Peper-de Goede of the Netherlands Marine Corps. "I am impressed by the determination and skills of our colleagues from the region, this exercise promises to be a very successful one."

HNLMS Rotterdam will continue to support the exercise until the 6<sup>th</sup> of November in vicinity of the port of Dar-es-Salaam. Thereafter the ship will return to Somali waters to commence her next counter piracy patrol.

## **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.

NATO Forces currently in Operation Ocean Shield:  
HNLMS Rotterdam(flagship) The Netherlands  
USS Halyburton (United States of America)

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