

Press Release



STANDING NATO MARITIME GROUP 1

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STANDING NATO MARITIME GROUP 1 DISRUPT PIRACY ATTACK OFF THE HORN OF AFRICA

Yesterday afternoon, March 28th, forces from Standing NATO Maritime Group One (SNMG1) disrupted a piracy attack while conducting counter-piracy Operation Allied Protector off the Horn of Africa.

At approximately 1200 GMT, the US Oliver Hazard Perry class frigate USS HALYBURTON received a piracy emergency call from GRANDEZZA, a thirty seven meter Maldivian flagged yacht sailing in the Gulf of Aden. The yacht reported being under machinegun and rocket propelled grenade attack from at least one skiff, a small open hull motorboat.

Due to the distance between NATO surface assets and GRANDEZZA, HALYBURTON immediately "scrambled" one of two embarked SH-60 SEAHAWK helicopters, CUTLASS 476, to provide support to GRANDEZZA and disrupt the piracy attack.

After bold manoeuvring and defensive actions by GRANDEZZA and the arrival of CUTLASS 476 on scene, the pirates abandoned their attack and raced to escape. Due to the large distances involved, and the fact that the helicopter had to leave the scene to refuel, the pirate vessel was able to evade detection before surface forces could arrive on scene. DE ZEVEN PROVINCIEËN debriefed the crew of GRANDEZZA and obtained statements and photographs of the pirates, which along with video imagery from CUTLASS 476, will be used in the future to improve counter piracy efforts and prosecute pirates.

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Note for editors:

1. Rear Admiral José Pereira da Cunha assumed Command of the force on 23 January 2009 in El Ferrol, Spain.
2. The Standing NATO Maritime Group 1 (SNMG1) is one of four immediate maritime reaction Forces. It is a multinational seagoing force, on task continuously, giving NATO the ability to respond quickly as the spearhead of the NRF, with the flexibility to promote NATO's interest anywhere in the world. The Force, previously known as Standing Naval Force Atlantic and Standing NATO Response Force Maritime Group 1, was officially renamed Standing NATO Maritime Group 1 in 2006.
3. Standing NATO Maritime Group ONE (SNMG1) under the Command of Rear Admiral José Domingos Pereira da Cunha, Portuguese Navy, will conduct maritime operations off the Horn of Africa in order to counter piracy attacks and to help deter, defend against and disrupt pirate activities in the area of operations in conjunction and coordination with other nations and organizations involved.
4. The five ships participating are:
 - NRP Côrte Real (flagship, Portugal)
 - HMCS Winnipeg (Canada)
 - HNLMS De Zeven Provinciën (Netherlands)
 - ESPS Blas de Lezo (Spain)
 - USS Halyburton (United States of America)

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Further information about SNMG1 is available at the web page:
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