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NATO's counter-piracy mission Operation Ocean Shield passed from Lisbon to Northwood

Today in a ceremony at NATO Allied Joint Force Command Lisbon (JFCLB) in Oeiras, Portugal, NATO's Maritime Command Headquarters Northwood (MC Northwood) assumed operational control of NATO's counter-piracy mission, Operation Ocean Shield.

The handover took place during SACEUR Commanders Conference, held in the Lisbon Headquarters. Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), Admiral James Stavridis, handed over formally the operational control from Lieutenant General Philippe Stoltz, Commander JFCLB, to Admiral Sir Trevor Soar KCB OBE, Commander MC Northwood.

Passing the Operation Ocean Shield tin plate, Admiral Stavridis dedicated an *"extraordinary well done to Lieutenant-General Philippe Stoltz and his magnificent team"*. Furthermore he pointed out, *"Admiral Sir Trevor Soar, I am very honoured to pass this plate to a wonderful, professional naval officer"*.

This change in command ceremony is one of the outcomes from the recent NATO Command Structure Reform. It was launched at the Lisbon Summit in November 2010 and the model and geographical footprint were approved by defence ministers in June 2011. The implementation is expected to take at least one year and the handover from Lisbon to Northwood is the first step in the process.

For JFC Lisbon, the turnover of the mission marks the end of more than two years of operational control over Operation Ocean Shield. NATO's counter-piracy operation off the Horn of Africa has been a substantial and successful contribution to international efforts to fight piracy and secure the waterways in this region for more than two years.

MC Northwood has considerable experience in counter-piracy operations at the tactical level already which it will be able to carry over to the higher operational level. Under the Command Review Northwood will become the Alliance's single Maritime Headquarters in NATO and as such will have responsibility for delivering command and control of the full spectrum of joint maritime capabilities and to act as NATO's principal maritime advisor.

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 presently 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 has announced its continuing commitment to counter-piracy by extending Operation Ocean Shield to December 2012.

NATO Forces currently in Operation Ocean Shield:

ITS Andrea Doria (Flagship) – Italy

RFA Fort Victoria - UK

USS Carney - USA

USS De Wert – USA

HDMS Absalon - Denmark

One Norwegian Navy Maritime Patrol Aircraft

Please direct media inquiries to either one of the points of contact mentioned below:

<p>Allied Joint Force Command Lisbon</p> <p>Public Affairs Advisor</p> <p>Oeiras, Portugal</p> <p>E-mail paa@jhfb.nato.int</p> <p>Tel. +351 21 440 4106</p> <p>Tel. +351 21 440 4330</p> <p>Mobile +351 91 30 40 253</p> <p>FAX. +351 21 246 9963</p> <p>www.jfclb.nato.int</p>	<p>Maritime Command Headquarters Northwood</p> <p>Public Affairs Officer</p> <p>Northwood, United Kingdom</p> <p>E-mail pio@manw.nato.int</p> <p>Tel. +44 (0)1923 956763</p> <p>Mobile +44 (0) 7747 008508</p> <p>www.manw.nato.int</p>
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