

Pirates Thwarted

as EU NAVFOR Supports NATO in Rescue Operation

Two recent piracy incidents off the Somali Coast involving vessels entered with the Club have highlighted the importance of adhering to anti-piracy best management practices and using the Internationally Recommended Transit Corridor in the Gulf of Aden.



Early on the morning of 5 February, the 21,195 GT bulk carrier "Ariella", owned by Splosna Plovba d.o.o. came under attack from Somali pirates who were able to board the vessel and attempt to take control of the ship.

The "Ariella" was sailing in a Group Transit within the Internationally Recommended Transit Corridor (IRTC) under the protection of Coalition navies. An alert was transmitted and picked up by an Indian warship TABAR which then sent out a general message on the Mercury communication system. An EU NAVFOR French Maritime Patrol Aircraft (MPA) was quickly on the scene and confirmed a sighting of armed pirates on the deck of the "Ariella". The MPA made contact with battle watch officers from the NATO Danish warship "Absalon".

Having determined that the full crew of the "Ariella" were safe in a secure location on the vessel the decision was made to send in specialist teams which resulted in the pirates fleeing from the vessel. At the same time as



NATO forces approach pirate mother ship with 3 skiffs

personnel from the NATO ship "Absalon" boarded "Ariella", sailors from the Russian warship "Neustrashimyy", which was operating nearby, successfully boarded and detained a second pirate skiff. The ongoing co-operation between the EU Naval Force (EU NAVFOR) and NATO Combined Maritime Force 151 (CMF 151), together with various maritime nations, such as Russia and India led to the successful release of the "Ariella".

The "Ariella" has a crew of 24 of mixed nationalities, (18 Filipino, 2 Indian and 4 Ukrainian including the Master). All were unharmed in this incident. The ship's passage was registered with MSC HOA, the vessel was in contact with UKMTO and was part of a Group Transit when she was attacked and the crew had implemented recommendations from the Industry Best Management Practices to Deter Piracy.

In a separate incident, the 11,731GT general cargo vessel "Andinet", owned by Ethiopian shipping Lines SC, managed to evade capture by pirates who failed to board the vessel thanks to the crew's adherence to the Industry Best Management Practices.

Commander John Harbour, EU NAVFOR spokesman, commented to *Sea Venture*:

"There is no doubt that application of best management practice and quick action by the crew of the "Ariella" helped to save the day in this attempted hijacking. EU NAVFOR played its part but it was excellent cooperation between all the players, military and civilian, that saved the ship and the crew from being pirated."

Mr. Egon Bandelj, president of Splosna Plovba d.o.o, owners of the "Ariella", also commented:

"The military action of liberating the hijacked vessel "Ariella" from the Somali pirates represents a precedent in the fight against pirates. The intervention is proof that by strict adherence to instructions and the professional application of same by all participants, it is possible to safeguard property without civilian casualties. Unfortunately, it is not always possible to avoid mortal danger to which military forces are exposed during such actions. I would like to congratulate and thank all participants: the naval forces in the Gulf of Aden, especially the crew of the Danish warship "Absalon", communication centres, the Captain and crew of our vessel "Ariella" and the emergency response team at our head office assigned for the safe management of our fleet."



EU NAVFOR French Maritime Patrol Aircraft hovers over the "Ariella"

EU NAVFOR strongly recommends that all vessels that transit through the high risk areas, namely Gulf of Aden, Somali Basin and Indian Ocean ensure that the ship's security plan implements all guidance and advice that is set out and contained in the Best Management Practices (BMP). The BMP can be found at the following link on the Club's website:

<http://www.simsl.com/Loss-Prevention/IndustryBMPPiracy0809.pdf>

Reference should also be made to MSC HOA website www.mschoa.org.

The main tasks of EU NAVFOR SOMALIA Operation ATALANTA are to escort merchant vessels carrying humanitarian aid of the 'World Food Program' (WFP), to protect vulnerable ships in the Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean and to deter and disrupt piracy.

The report of the attack and rescue of the "Ariella" is based on the MSC HOA report of the event and has been used here with their kind permission.