

# Operation Ocean Shield

## November 2014

**Mission:** Since August 2009, NATO warships and aircraft have been patrolling the waters off the Horn of Africa as part of Operation Ocean Shield. Their mission is to contribute to international efforts to counter maritime piracy and to support capacity-building efforts with regional governments. Ocean Shield is protecting one of the world's busiest shipping lanes. Together with other international naval forces, the NATO mission has significantly reduced piracy in the region. In 2009, pirates captured more than 40 ships and NATO recorded 130 further pirate attacks off Somalia. Since May 2012, not a single ship has been captured. Despite these successes, piracy remains a threat. NATO assesses that pirates continue to possess the intent and capacity to attack ships. In addition, the root causes of piracy inside Somalia remain. At the NATO Wales Summit, Allied leaders agreed to continue Ocean Shield until the end of 2016 through a so-called "focused presence". As part of this approach, NATO would conduct its patrols during the inter-monsoon periods, when the weather is more conducive to pirate activity. However, NATO will continue to regularly monitor the situation also during the rainy seasons and may deploy naval vessels during that period if needed.

**Activities:** NATO vessels conduct intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance missions to verify shipping activity off the coast of Somalia. Commercial ships are often escorted by NATO ships and/or international naval forces to ensure safe passage. Suspected pirate ships can be pursued and boarded, and NATO forces can intervene to stop a hijacking. Suspected pirates detained during such operations are transferred to national law enforcement agencies. The NATO naval forces operate off the Horn of Africa, including the Gulf of Aden and the Western Indian Ocean up to the Strait of Hormuz. NATO, in particular through the NATO Shipping Centre, also works with the maritime shipping community to advise on how best to protect vessels from pirate attacks.

**Participants:** Operation Ocean Shield is run from NATO's Maritime Command Headquarters in Northwood in the United Kingdom. All Allies contribute to the mission, either directly or indirectly, through NATO's command structures and common funding. NATO Allies provide ships and maritime patrol aircraft to NATO Standing Maritime Groups, which in turn assign ships, on a rotational basis, to Ocean Shield. On average, three to five NATO ships are part of Ocean Shield at any point in time. NATO's counter-piracy operation has also received support from NATO partners. Ukraine and New Zealand have both contributed ships and/or patrol aircraft. NATO hopes to welcome other non-NATO partners in the near future. Ocean Shield cooperates closely with other naval forces in the region including those from the European Union's counter-piracy mission, the United States-led Combined Task Force 151 and national naval forces. NATO has also conducted counter-piracy training with navies from Japan and China.

**Regional Capacity Building:** Regional Capacity building is an important element to bring maritime security to the region and to transfer counter piracy efforts from the International Community to Somalia and regional states. Within means and capabilities, and focused on areas where it provides added value, NATO's capacity building effort aims to assist regional states in developing their own ability to combat piracy activities. Capacity building programmes include training, educational courses, participation in military exercises, and



advice on security sector reform with the goal of enhancing regional stability by strengthening partners' ability to defend against external threats.

**Legal Mandate:** Operation Ocean Shield is in full accordance with the relevant United Nations Security Council Resolutions relating to Somali-based piracy. UNSC Resolution 2184 (November 2014) renewed the call on states and regional organisations to take active part in the fight against piracy off the coast of Somalia. With the consent of Somali authorities, the resolution also mandates taking “all necessary means to repress acts of piracy and armed robbery within the territorial waters of Somalia.”

### Pirate Attacks 2008 – 2014 (as of October)

Location	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Somali Basin	8 hijacks	26 hijacks	26 hijacks	4 hijacks	2 hijacks	0 hijacks	0 hijacks
	11 attacks	58 attacks	68 attacks	52 attacks	5 attacks	5 attacks	0 attacks
	N/A	15 disruptions	88 disruptions	52 disruptions	16 disruptions	6 disruptions	0 disruptions
Gulf of Aden	33 hijacks	18 hijacks	12 hijacks	1 hijacks	0 hijacks	0 hijacks	0 hijacks
	42 attacks	67 attacks	33 attacks	29 attacks	7 attacks	1 attack	0 attacks
	N/A	47 disruptions	56 disruptions	21 disruptions	7 disruptions	2 disruptions	0 disruptions
Arabian Sea	N/A	1 hijacks	7 hijacks	19 hijacks	5 hijacks	0 hijacks	0 hijacks
	N/A	5 attacks	31 attacks	48 attacks	10 attacks	0 attacks	1 attacks
	N/A	N/A	3 disruptions	23 disruptions	14 disruptions	0 disruptions	0 disruptions
Total		45 hijacks	45 hijacks	24 hijacks	7 hijacks	0 hijacks	0 hijacks
		130 attacks	132 attacks	129 attacks	22 attacks	6 attacks	1 attacks
		62 disruptions	147 disruptions	96 disruptions	37 disruptions	8 disruptions	0 disruptions

**Legend:**

Hijack: Pirates are able to take control of a vessel

Attack: Pirates try to take over a ship but do not succeed.

Disruption: International military action causes the pirates to abort an attack.

**Pirated vessels:** As at 11 November 2014, pirates are holding an estimated of 30 hostages.

