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NATO SHIPPING CENTRE NEWSLETTER, JULY – SEPTEMBER 2019

1. Operations. NATO MARCOM continues its naval activities in NATO areas of responsibility. Operation Sea Guardian (OSG) Focused Operation 19-4, led by the Flagship HRVS Dubrovnik in cooperation with ESPS Mistral, maritime patrol aircraft and other NATO units in associated support, finished on 16 September. Of note, Exercise MED INTERCEPTOR took place during the Focused Operation, held between Deep Explorer-Technip FMC Dive Support Vessel (DSV) and HRVS Dubrovnik in the Central Mediterranean. The exercise was split over two scenarios (Event 1 and Event 2).



Event 1 involved passive participation for DSV Deep Explorer, culminating in an unopposed boarding onboard. HRVS Dubrovnik sent a request for permission to board Deep Explorer. Once the Master gave permission for the boarding, Deep Explorer reduced speed to 10 knots in order to let HRVS Dubrovnik's boarding team approach her portside. Upon embarkation, the boarding team conducted documentation checks and general ship and cargo searches.



Event 2 was a “Suspicious Approach from Sea by Small Craft/Skiff”, which was performed by Dubrovnik’s RHIB acting as a speed boat/skiff performing high-speed and aggressive manoeuvres, simulating possible pirate/terrorist tactics commonly used in the Horn of Africa and more recently in the Strait of Hormuz. This event allowed Deep Explorer to practice their pre-planned responses to such an attack.



The MED INTERCEPTOR exercise was an idea that originated during the MARCOM Maritime Security Symposium (MMSS) held in June 2019. It was a great opportunity to practice security procedures between NATO units and merchant vessels in a realistic threat scenario. All desired objectives were achieved, and hopefully the success of the exercise will broaden minds for other shipping companies to volunteer for similar interactions with Standing NATO Forces operating in the Mediterranean Sea and elsewhere.

2. Standing Naval Forces. Standing NATO Maritime Group One (SNMG1) and Standing NATO Maritime Group Two (SNMG2) changed flagship duties during a port visit to Rota, Spain, on 26 July.

SNMG1 flagship duties were transferred from the guided-missile destroyer USS Gravelly (DDG 107) to the guided-missile destroyer USS Gridley (DDG 101). For SNMG2, flagship duties were transferred from Her Majesty's Canadian Ship (HMCS) Toronto to HMCS Halifax. Rear Admiral Edward Cashman, Commander of SNMG1, and Commodore Josée Kurtz, Commander of SNMG2, will remain in command of their groups until the end of the year. Commodore Josée Kurtz said, "This is what NATO is all about – nations coming together to act as one, providing presence, and helping to assure our partners and allies of our commitment to regional security in their waters."

NATO Standing Maritime Groups form the core maritime capabilities of NATO's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF). They provide a continuous maritime capability to execute NATO missions across the spectrum of operations, demonstrate solidarity, and strengthen diplomatic and professional links among Allied naval forces.



Quartermaster Seaman Apprentice John Laine raises the NATO flag aboard the guided-missile destroyer USS Gridley (DDG 101) as the ship assumes the duties of flagship for Standing NATO Maritime Group One (SNMG1). (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Cameron Stoner)

3. Safety and Security of Navigation.

In the last few months, a number of maritime areas have been reserved for military training purposes in the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea via Navigation Warning (NAVWARN). This action is unusual because of the unprecedented size of these areas, which could have an impact on commercial shipping. While military forces exercising in these areas have a responsibility to ensure the safety of commercial shipping, the NATO Shipping Centre encourages the entire shipping community to exercise caution in vicinity of military forces and keep up-to-date on NAVWARNs pertaining to military exercises in the areas in which they are sailing.

The NSC, in cooperation with the U.S. Maritime Administration (MARAD), continues to encourage all ships to report incidents of GPS jamming or other interference (i.e. rogue GSM-towers) in the Eastern Mediterranean. We also have recent reports of GPS jamming in the Strait of Hormuz. GPS Jamming is a threat to safety and security of navigation.

Merchant ships are encouraged to report any suspicious activity in the Mediterranean Sea and broader North Atlantic Region, including the Baltic Sea, to support NATO's maritime situational awareness.

Reporting on GPS jamming and other incidents can be done on the NATO Shipping Website at www.shipping.nato.int. For faster reporting, Email or phone our 24/7 Duty Officer at shipping@mc.nato.int or +44 (0) 1923 956574.

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