

NATO's Response Force conducts maritime exercise - ACT

Written by ACT PAO

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A large fleet of warships, submarines and auxiliary vessels from NATO's Response Force (NRF) sailed from ports across Europe on 12 April to take part in the key maritime exercise "Brilliant Mariner" in the North and Baltic Seas.

The ships and submarines will take part in integration training that will enable them to respond to operations or crisis situations anywhere in the world if required. The exercise, which will end on 22 April 2010, will be operating in Northern European waters and airspace.

Six thousand five hundred military personnel from 10 NATO nations (France as Maritime commander, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Spain, United Kingdom and United States) are taking part in the exercise, together with one Partnership for Peace country (Sweden). The exercise involves 31 warships (including an aircraft carrier, frigates, tankers and mine counter measure vessels), 4 submarines and 28 aircraft.

The maritime forces departed from Wilhemshavn, Eckenforde and Cuxhaven in Germany early Monday morning. As part of the exercise, NATO's Mine Countermeasures Group, comprising a dozen vessels, navigated the Kiel Canal to the southern Kattegat to conduct mine clearance and ordnance disposal operations.

Exercise Brilliant Mariner is coordinated by the Allied Maritime Command, based in Northwood, London. The response force is faced with a realistic scenario presenting a number of challenges for the commanders at sea, including asymmetric or terrorist threats, maritime security operations and embargo operations.

"Exercise Brilliant Mariner is an opportunity to really put NATO forces through their paces," said NATO's maritime commander, Admiral Sir Trevor Soar. "As well as operational training, an important aspect of the exercise is the humanitarian aid training that the forces will carry out. This will ensure that, if called, NATO forces can make a real difference in a crisis situation."

Rear-Admiral Jean-Louis Kerignard, commanding the French maritime force, is conducting the exercise from the flagship 'FS Mistral'. "As Maritime component commander during Exercise Brilliant Mariner, I will conduct force integration training, working closely with all the participating

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nations in order to certify our readiness for NRF15," he said.