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EU NAVFOR-Atalanta safely escorts food aid convoy into Somalia

The crew of frigate HMS Northumberland completed on 6 February the 1st 4 ship convoy of Operation EU NAVFOR-Atalanta. The ship has spent 10 days escorting 4 merchant vessels along almost the entire length of the Somali coastline. Despite the ever present threat of piracy, the ships were safely delivered to the ports of Mogadishu, Bossassoo, and Berbera. All the merchant vessels carried cargos vital to the relief of the humanitarian situation in Somalia.

HMS Northumberland left the port of Mombasa on the morning of the 26 January in company with the MVs Sea King, Victoria, Ryong Gang II, and Kwan Mo Bong. The ship's then began a journey of over 1000 miles up the coast of Somalia with the ever present threat of piracy. The MV SeaKing was the 1st to be safely escorted into the port of Mogadishu in the South of Somalia. The remaining vessels then continued on the much longer journey round the horn of Africa and into the northern ports of Bossassoo, and Berbera. For the higher risk areas as the merchant vessels closed the ports, HMS Northumberland's ship's company went to Action Stations with her sea boats and a detachment of Royal Marines in close support of the merchantmen. With her weapons and sensors on high alert, Northumberland remained ready for any hostile action but fortunately the handover to Somali and World Food Programme security forces went smoothly and without incident. Commenting on this phase of Operation EU NAVFOR-Atalanta, the ship's Commanding Officer, Commander Martin Simpson, stated *'This has been the 1st large convoy escort task during Operation EU NAVFOR-Atalanta and I am pleased to say that like our previous escort missions, this one was successful and without incident. We remain committed to our humanitarian and security mission and the benefit it brings to the people of Somalia in their time of need'*.

The ship has been part of the European Union Operation EU NAVFOR-ATALANTA since early December and has completed a number of World Food Programme escort missions into Mogadishu.