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Dr Ng Visits SAF Task Group in Gulf of Aden

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Minister for Defence Dr Ng Eng Hen speaking to SAF task group personnel operating in the Gulf of Aden on board the stealth frigate RSS Intrepid.

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Minister for Defence Dr Ng Eng Hen visited the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) task group deployed in the Gulf of Aden for international counter-piracy operations earlier today. During the visit hosted by Chief of Navy Rear-Admiral Ng Chee Peng on board the Republic of Singapore Navy's (RSN's) Formidable-class frigate RSS Intrepid, Dr Ng was briefed on the task group's integrated operations by the frigate and naval helicopter. He also witnessed the conduct of surveillance, disruption and compliant boarding operations that are executed when the task group is activated to respond to a pirate attack on a merchant vessel. Dr Ng also interacted with the men and women from the task group who shared about their operational experiences.

Speaking at a doorstep interview after the visit, Dr Ng emphasised the importance of the task group's mission and Singapore's continued commitment in ensuring the safety and freedom of navigation in the Gulf of Aden. He said, "Singapore has one of the busiest ports in the world and understands fully the value and importance of global maritime commerce. It is imperative

that sea lines of navigation continue to be free passage for commercial and other legitimate uses. When this series of piracy attacks occurred in the Gulf of Aden, we felt that it was very important for Singapore to be involved in this."

The 145-strong SAF task group, consisting of personnel from the Navy, Air Force and Army, was deployed earlier this month and operates under the ambit of the multinational Combined Task Force (CTF) 151. The SAF task group has been conducting daily helicopter surveillance flights and sector patrols to deter and disrupt pirate activities. The integration of the naval helicopter and frigate enables the frigate to sense-make faster and undertake counter-piracy operations at longer ranges.

The SAF achieved full operational capability for the naval helicopters in May 2012 and the operational deployment of the frigate-naval helicopter task group underscores the SAF's ability to rapidly assimilate new advanced platforms. The deployment of the frigate and naval helicopter for non-conventional operations such as counter-piracy also demonstrates the versatility of these platforms. Prior to this deployment, the SAF has deployed three task groups since 2009, each comprising a Landing Ship Tank and two Super Puma helicopters. In addition, an RSAF Fokker-50 Maritime Patrol Aircraft detachment was deployed from April to July 2011 to support the international counter-piracy efforts. The SAF was also in command of CTF 151 from January to April 2010 and from March to June 2011.



Singapore

Minister for Defence Dr Ng Eng Hen (second from left) disembarking from the S-70B Naval Helicopter after he observed a disruption operations drill. With him is the Chief of Navy, Rear-Admiral Ng Chee Peng (left).



Minister for Defence Dr Ng Eng Hen (second from left) observing a compliant operations drill onboard the RSS Intrepid during his visit to the SAF task group. With him is the Commander SAF Task Group, Colonel Frederick Chew (left).

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