NATO’S SUBMARINE CAPACITIES IN DYNAMIC MONGOOSE-14

It was reported from Bergen, Norway, on 21st February that NATO’s submarine warfare Exercise DYNAMIC MONGOOSE 2014 (DMON 14) had been concluded that day off the coast of Norway, as the ships, submarines, aircraft, and personnel from eight participating Allied nations wrapped up the simulations and began to take stock of the lessons the exercise provided for future operations.

Rough weather provided a challenging environment for the participants, who were given the opportunity to train for a variety of high end maritime warfighting skills. During the exercise, participating surface ships also had the opportunity to conduct difficult manoeuvres involved in replenishment-at-sea (RAS) training.

Submarines from Portugal, Norway and France, under operational control of Commander Submarines NATO (COMSUBNATO), and surface ships from Norway, Germany, the United Kingdom, France, and Poland under the command of Standing NATO Maritime Group ONE (SNMG-1) Commodore Nils Andreas Stensønes simulated combat against one another in a busy multi-threat environment.

The increasingly challenging exercise scenario incorporated several warfighting areas, including submarine detection, tracking and engagements of surface units and other submarines, aircraft detection, tracking and attacking of submarines, as well as naval task groups escorting high value units and protecting them from the submarine threat. The exercise challenged participants’ ability to seamlessly integrate multinational forces, including submarines, ships and aircraft into a coherent fighting force.

“During this exercise, SNMG-1 has grown from two to a task group of ten vessels. This demonstrates how the group can seamlessly integrate vessels from Allied nations and expand in accordance with the demands of the current situation,” said Commodore Stensøne. He added, “The contributions from all the nations have been outstanding. I believe we have made a significant step forward in anti-submarine warfare capability, as single units, as an integrated task group with ships and aircraft and as a task force.”

Maritime patrol aircraft and helicopters operating from Sola Air Base under operational command of NATO Maritime Air Command (COMMARAIR) added to the complexity and realism of the training by incorporating the air element of anti-submarine and anti-surface warfare.
“We appreciate the excellent host nation support Norway provided for ships, submarines, and aircraft from Haakonsvern Navy Base in Bergen and Air Station Sola in Stavanger. This is an ideal venue for such exercises, and our Norwegian allies are superb hosts,” said Rear-Admiral Bob Kamensky, COMSUBNATO. He added, “Moreover, the contribution of all participating units and personnel from Norway, Portugal, Poland, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States provided a great opportunity for all units to test and hone their skills, equipment and tactical procedures in such a complex war environment.”

Background
COMSUBNATO is the Alliance’s command for all submarines deployed by NATO and is fully integrated to the Allied Maritime Command, MARCOM. It provides submarine expertise and advice in support of NATO operations and exercises. This command is also responsible for the development of policies, plans, doctrine, tactics and procedures related to the operational use of submarines by NATO. COMSUBNATO is manned by 30 officers and petty officers representing all NATO nations operating submarines. This staff consist of four divisions and of the Submarine Operating Authority (SUBOPAUTH) which is manned 24/7 to provide a permanent link for all submarines deployed at sea.

In addition COMSUBNATO is responsible for the International Submarine Escape and Rescue Liaison Office (ISMERLO) which was created by NATO to assist in the global co-ordination of submarine search and rescue operations. The command is therefore responsible for adapting submarine procedures and tactics and for ensuring that all NATO nations operating submarines are fully interoperable.

Participating assets deployed in Exercise DYNAMIC MONGOOSE 2014 (DMON 14)
Three submarines from Portugal, Norway and France, under operational control of NATO Submarine Command (COMSUBNATO), joinen ten surface ships from Norway, Germany, the United Kingdom, France, and Poland, under the command of Standing NATO Maritime Group ONE (SNMG-1) Commodore Nils Andreas Stensønes. Host nation Norway provided support from both the Haakonsvern Naval Base and the Sola Air Base.

Deployed personnel involved totalled (approximate figures) 2300 thus: surface 1700; in submarines 200; air forces 100; ashore at Northwood, (UK) and Sola (Norway) 300.

NATO 1
Portuguese submarine berthing in Bergen Naval Base.

NATO 2
Norwegian submarine in the fjord near Bergen.

NATO 3
French Atlanta 2 ASW patrol aircraft on the tarmac at Sola Airport, Stavanger.

NATO 4
Norwegian submarine and HNoMS Thor Heyerdahl in the fjord near Bergen.

NATO 5
SNMG1 Flagship HNoMS Thor Heyerdahl (F314) followed by FGS Hamburg (F220), FGS Augsberg (F213) and FGS Mecklenberg-Vorpommern (F218).

NATO 6
Captain Steinweller (CO FGS Magdeburg) at left, and Commodore Stensønes (COM SNMG1) attending a manoeuvre briefing by the Navigating Officer.

NATO 7
FS Primaguet.