

WARM UP

1 What does NATO stand for? What is the purpose of this organisation? Read the introduction to check.

Global peace and NATO

The **North Atlantic Treaty Organization** (NATO) was founded in 1949 between 10 European countries, Canada and the USA. This alliance between Europe and North America now has 28 members and its purpose is to protect the freedom and security of these members using primarily political means to encourage cooperation, prevent conflict and peacefully resolve disputes. If necessary, however, it will use military means to carry out operations, often in cooperation with other countries and international organisations. It has been involved in operations and peace-keeping missions in many countries such as Afghanistan, Kosovo, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Libya, the Mediterranean and Africa.

NATO Keeping The Pressure on Pirates

[December 2012] Pirate attacks off the coast of Somalia dropped sharply in 2012, the outgoing commander of the NATO mission has said. In the past six months, there has been no successful hijacking of a merchant vessel off Somalia, said Dutch Commodore Ben Bekkering, who has handed over command of NATO's Ocean Shield anti-piracy force to Italian Rear-Admiral Antonio Natale.

Pirates operating from the Somali coast have made hundreds of millions of dollars in ransoms from hijacking ships. This has led to NATO, the European Union and other nations dispatching warships to patrol the area. Other security measures have been also used.

(1) Bekkering attributed the decline in piracy to these naval patrols and the heightened security on the merchant ships. (2) However Bekkering is convinced that if the world's navies cut back on their efforts and

navy ships disappeared, the piracy model would still be intact. Approximately 16 to 18 ships from all international forces are on patrol in the Indian Ocean at any one time. (3)

The financial crisis has led many Western countries to cut their defence budgets, but there are no signs that NATO's commitment to the anti-piracy operation is lessening. (4)

Pirates are still holding five ships with 136 hostages of various nationalities, but international forces are not expected to adopt a more aggressive policy in order to try to free them. (5) 'There is the flag state, the crew members are often of four or five nationalities, there is the cargo and the people who are shipping the cargo also have something to say.'

Source: www.uk.reuters.com

READING COMPREHENSION

2 **BEC** Read the article and choose the best sentence to fill each gap. There is one extra sentence you do not need.

- a There would be many parties involved in an operation like that, explained Bekkering.
- b But piracy remains a viable 'business model' for these people.
- c Further help has come from the Somali authorities who have been running successful counter-piracy campaigns.
- d They include the use of private armed security guards by merchant ships who have to cross this area.
- e In fact, in March, the alliance extended its counter-piracy mission until the end of 2014.
- f According to Bekkering, this is the minimum number needed to patrol such a vast area.

3 Find out about one of NATO's current operations or missions and write a short report. Include the following details:

- where the operation is;
- how long it has been going on/it is predicted to continue;
- the reasons behind the operation;
- some of the main aspects.

