



Allied Maritime Command HQ MARCOM

News Release



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SNMCMG1 Estonian Commander Hands over Leadership to Neighbouring Latvian Commander

RIGA, Latvia – Latvian Commander Gvido Laudups assumed command of Standing NATO Mine Counter Measures Group One (SNMCMG1) today during an Operational Handover of Command ceremony held at the Port of Riga.

Commander Johan-Elias Seljamaa of the Estonian Navy turned over command of the group after leading aboard the flagship, an Estonian command and support ship, ENS Wambola since Feb. 13, 2017. He began the deployment aboard German MCM command and control vessel FGS Elbe in June 2016, and also led aboard minehunter ENS Admiral Cowan for a month earlier this year.

Throughout the yearlong deployment, SNMCMG1 was comprised of various ships including: Belgian minehunters BNS Narcis and Primula, Dutch minehunter HNLMS Schiedam and Willemstad, Latvian minehunter Imanta, Lithuanian minehunter LNS Skalvis, Norwegian minehunter HNoMS Hinnøey and Måløy, and British MCM vessels HMS Grimsby, Ramsey and Shoreham.

“Looking back at this year in command, one of the most interesting and challenging in my career, I would like to thank all the captains, crews and staff members with whom I have sailed. Working together has been the best part of the deployment,” said Seljamaa.

SNMCMG1 visited more than three dozen harbours and conducted maritime situational awareness missions. The group also participated in mine clearance and historical ordnance disposal operations to make the seas safer for all traffic and exercises including: Dynamic Move, Flag Officer Sea Training (FOST), Joint Warrior 17-1, and BALTOPS.

“We achieved our mission in providing NATO with high readiness MCM capability. We found and cleared more than 100 historical mines, proving the competence of our Group, but also the requirement for such a capability,” said Seljamaa. “I wish fair winds and following seas to the crews and staff we sailed together with but also to the next COMSNMCMG1 and his crews. Enjoy your time as time passes quickly.”

Commander Gvido Laudups will lead from the new flagship for SNMCMG1, Latvian MCM command and support ship LVNS Virsaitis with a multinational command group comprised of Danish, Latvian and Lithuanian sailors.

"This is the first time for Latvia to take command of SNMCMG1, and I hope this will be a period of professional work," said Laudups. "We are determined to rise to the challenge and add new knowledge and skills to our experience."

The Virsaitis will initially be joined by Estonian minehunter ENS Sakala and German minehunter FGS Sulzbach-Rosenberg. Ships from Belgium, Netherlands, and Norway will join SNMCMG1 later this year.

SNMCMG1 is a multinational integrated force that projects a constant and visible reminder of NATO's solidarity and cohesion afloat. The Standing NATO Maritime Groups provide NATO with a continuous maritime capability for operations and other activities in peacetime and in periods of crisis and conflict. They also help to establish Alliance presence, conduct routine diplomatic visits to different countries, support transformation and provide a variety of military maritime capabilities to ongoing missions.