



At left, Chinese boarding team aboard Churchill. Above, Churchill Seaman Qing Su, from New York, translates for the Chinese during the exercise.

## U.S., China Team Up for Counterpiracy Exercise

From a USS Winston S. Churchill News Release

GULF OF ADEN, Sept. 18, 2012 – Guided-missile destroyer USS Winston S. Churchill and other U.S. Navy assets participated in a counterpiracy exercise with Chinese naval elements near the Horn of Africa yesterday. The exercise, the first bilateral counterpiracy exercise ever conducted between the United States and China, paired Winston S. Churchill with the Chinese frigate Yi Yang to conduct a combined visit, board, search and seizure boarding. The focus, officials said, was on bilateral interoperability in detecting, boarding and searching suspected vessels as well as the ability of both Chinese and American naval assets to respond to pirated vessels.

"Piracy is a threat to the freedom of the seas, economic security, and the safety of mariners from all nations," said Navy Cmdr. Chris D. Stone, Winston S. Churchill's commanding officer. "Bilateral exercises such as this demonstrate the cooperative will of the international community and increase proficiency of multinational forces in confronting the threat.

"We have common regional and global security challenges," he continued, "and we are able to jointly address those by training together."

Teams from both ships performed the boarding on Winston S. Churchill, which was simulating a pirated vessel. Executing the boarding side by side as a combined U.S.-Chinese team, the team successfully searched the vessel and assisted role-playing mariners. Participants felt that the training was meaningful, providing a unique opportunity to operate with alongside one another.

"It was exciting to interact with the Chinese sailors and cooperate in a critical environment," said Navy Lt. j.g. Edward R. Kellum, boarding officer for Winston S. Churchill's team. "Any time we work with a foreign military, it adds a different perspective to how we operate. However, to collaborate with the Chinese in an antipiracy framework is a rare opportunity and a real achievement for maritime security."

Following the exercise, leaders from both navies discussed the elements of the boarding to learn how to better operate together in the future. U.S. and Chinese leaders expressed how important and beneficial the training was, both in terms of building cooperative ties and development of techniques to counter piracy.

"We're appreciative of the opportunity to train with other nations to establish ties that will allow us to work together to face the piracy threat," Stone said. "As fellow mariners, we have great admiration for our Chinese counterparts, who are sailing alongside us and other coalition partners to keep the sea lanes safe."