

Oceanographic Vessel Rescues Pleasure Craft on Fire



On Monday 1st August 2011, at 8.40am, the NATO Undersea Research Centre (NURC) oceanographic vessel *Alliance* came to the rescue of an 18m pleasure craft in Italian international waters, near the port of Savona in the Ligurian Sea. The bridge watchkeepers noticed a motor yacht on fire at about 5 miles distance. The NURC crew promptly raised the alarm with the Italian Coastguard and launched a Delta Fast Rescue Boat. Six people were saved uninjured, but visibly shocked: an Italian family of five and an Ecuadorian woman.

At the same time of arrival as the Italian Coastguard vessels, the rescued persons were taken on board the *Alliance* where they received first aid. Meanwhile, due to the gravity and extent of the fire, the *Alliance*'s request for firefighting was denied by the coastguard. After a few minutes the motor yacht sank.

"We all have to consider ourselves lucky that our NATO ship *Alliance* was on the scene at the right moment, said Dirk Tielbuerger, Director of NURC. Due to the vigilant and determined behaviour of the crew all were rescued and were able to return home uninjured".

All persons rescued were transferred to a Coastguard tender. The *Alliance* returned to one of NURC research activities which is in this case the Sirena11 trial, held by NURC, along with international partners, in the Ligurian Sea, between July 22nd and August 1st to investigate the presence and distribution of whales and dolphins in the area using a combination of visual and acoustic methods. The information gained will be used by NURC to help it to continue improving its long term protection of these animals.