

News story: Royal Navy work with Australians on massive drug bust

Parcels of seized narcotics lay on the deck of the smuggling vessel. Crown copyright.

Under the command of Combined Task Force (CTF)150, Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) Fort Rosalie's Royal Navy Sea King Mark 7 helicopter spotted a suspicious boat while flying over the Arabian Sea, off the coast of Oman, this week.

Australian ship HMAS Warramunga – working with Fort Rosalie as part of the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) – then intercepted it and found more than 3.5 tonnes of illicit substances, valued at £105million.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Thanks to the skill and professionalism of Britain's Armed Forces, working with key allies like the Australians, we are keeping our citizens safe by tackling the evil international drugs trade that funds terrorism.

I am incredibly grateful that we have the best service men and women in the world who always go the extra mile, whether they are protecting us from harm or saving precious wildlife like this family of turtles.

The Flight Commander, Lieutenant Commander Dan Breward Royal Navy said:

We're delighted to have been able to contribute to CTF 150's missions within the joint operations area. There was a massive effort from all parties involved from both Fort Rosalie and, ultimately, Warramunga.

As long as drugs and weapons continue to be trafficked to aid terrorism, we will be here with the coalition members to stop them; we have a track record that we aim to build upon.

In addition to the huge haul, RFA Fort Rosalie was also able to rescue three young Loggerhead Turtles that were caught in a huge mass of fishing nets drifting through the water. The baby turtles were freed by some delicate cutting from the team.

The Navigator, Second Officer Thorsten Brabetz, said:

It was not what we expected to find when we investigated the floats. It was great to be able to save the turtles and release them back into the sea. It was a real feel good moment for the boats crew and the entire ship.

In 2017, CMF ships have seized a total of 22.67 tonnes of narcotics. Boarding, search and seizure operations at sea require a persistent and methodical approach by CMF sailors and marines.