

News story: UK and France complete joint counter-terror mission

Combined Task Force 150 (CTF150) polices more than 3 million square miles of sea in order to track down vessels smuggling weapons and drugs and other substances that fund or support terrorism, as well as providing reassurance to ships using the waters.

Between April and June, British, French, US and Australian warships, part of a multinational coalition and commanded by the Franco-British headquarters in Bahrain, scored eight drugs busts. These missions removed 1.75 tonnes of narcotics from the market and included a seizure of 265kg of heroin and 455kg of hashish by the Royal Navy Type 23 frigate, HMS Monmouth.

CTF150 is also focused on deterring and denying maritime terrorist activity in the region. This includes some of the world's most vital trade routes such as the Suez Canal and Bab Al Mandeb Strait, the latter of which saw an unsuccessful attack against a merchant vessel in May.

The headquarters staff has been made up of 24 British and French sailors and commanded by French Rear Admiral Olivier Lebas. In 2019, the task force will be commanded by a Royal Navy officer, with another combined UK-French staff.

Minister for the Armed Forces, Mark Lancaster, said:

The successful joint command of CTF150, supporting our French allies, has demonstrated Britain's firm commitment to global maritime security.

From the joint leadership of this multinational task force to fighting side by side against Daesh, the UK and France are continuing to build on our historic defence relationship as we work to tackle terror on the global scale.

The Franco-British team has been directing operations since April after taking over from the Canadian Navy, and will pass on command to the Pakistan Navy this month. Navies from the Combined Maritime Forces, a coalition of 31 nations, take it in turns to lead the task force either from a command ship or the headquarters in Bahrain.