

Royal Navy seizes £11 million worth of drugs in Arabian Sea

Royal Marines from HMS Montrose, part of a Combined Maritime Forces Task Force in the Middle East, boarded a suspect boat in the Northern Arabian Sea while on a counter-narcotics patrol.

In an operation lasting over 10 hours, 2.4 tonnes of heroin, crystal methamphetamine and hashish were seized. This came just two days after a separate bust in which HMS Montrose seized 275kg of heroin from another suspect boat in the area. The combined haul of almost three tonnes of drugs has an estimated wholesale value of £11 million.

The operations have prevented large amounts of illicit drugs potentially entering the UK and being sold on British streets, and the seizures help deny criminals an income source often associated with the funding of terrorism. Our adversaries will use any and all means to achieve their objectives and undermine our interests. As a responsible nation with global interests, and to keep the UK safe in this changing world, defence is stepping forward to play our part in these international operations targeting the smuggling of illegal substances.

Minister for the Armed Forces James Heappey said:

The Royal Navy and Royal Marines have once again proven their professionalism and operational capability in seizing illicit substances in transit.

The Armed Forces are committed to tackling organised crime around the world. The Royal Navy works with our allies in the Coalition Task Force to protect our people and our interests.

As a result of these operations, Britain's streets are safer and a possible source of terrorist financing has been choked off.

HMS Montrose is part of the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF), a multi-national force of 33 nations currently led by the Royal Canadian Navy, working in the Gulf region to disrupt criminal and terrorist organisations and their illicit activity. Coalition Task Force 150, as part of the CMF, operates to disrupt the activity of criminal organisations, in particular narcotics and weapons smuggling.

HMS Montrose last made a drugs bust in October 2020 when sailors and marines seized 450 kilograms of methamphetamine, with a wholesale value of £18 million, which was the largest ever seizure of methamphetamines by the Royal Navy in the Gulf.

A spokesperson for Combined Maritime Forces said:

The Royal Navy, working with the Combined Maritime Forces, has carried out another successful operation to stop illicit substances reaching Europe. This builds on the Royal Navy's fantastic work in the Caribbean during the hurricane season, where £360 million worth of drugs were seized across an eight-month period.

HMS Montrose is the Royal Navy's Forward Deployed Frigate in the Gulf and has been in the region since leaving her base port of Devonport in early 2019. The UK actively supports several operations and multi-national task forces in the Middle East in order to protect international and British interests.