

Royal Navy seizes over 450kg in the largest methamphetamine drug bust in the Middle East

News story

Sailors and Royal Marines from HMS Montrose intercepted over 450 kilograms of methamphetamine, with a wholesale value of £18 million, during a counter-narcotics operation in the Arabian Sea.



Sailors and Royal Marines from HMS Montrose contributed to an international effort

The operation, which was part of the Combined Maritime Forces' (CMF) Operation SEA SHIELD, was an international effort involving several of the CMF's 33 member nations and partners.

In rough seas, and aided by the ship's Wildcat helicopter, sailors and Royal Marines conducted the boarding of the suspicious vessel, and during an extensive search discovered the 450kg haul hidden amongst the boat's cargo.

Minister for the Armed Forces James Heappey said:

Following several large drugs busts by the Royal Navy in the Caribbean, HMS Montrose has conducted the most successful counter-methamphetamine operation ever in the Middle East.

Organised crime funds terrorism and by preventing these drugs reaching the open market HMS Montrose has directly interrupted illegal activity that causes considerable harm across the globe.

Intercepting and boarding suspicious vessels at sea is a skilled operation,

made more challenging by the threat of COVID. The ship's medical team was responsible for de-contaminating all personnel and equipment, and specialist PPE was used throughout the boarding process.

Commanding Officer of HMS Montrose Commander Charles Collins said:

Every sailor and marine, airman and woman, alongside our international partners, should be proud to have contributed to the success of this operation which has undoubtedly kept millions of pounds of drugs off our streets.

With four Mine Countermeasure Vessels, a forward deployed Type 23 Frigate and a Royal Fleet Auxiliary support ship permanently deployed in the Middle East, the Royal Navy remains committed to keeping the region's critical sea lanes free from illegal activity in order to maintain maritime security.

The Royal Marine Boarding Team's Officer Commanding from 42 Commando Lt Joe Martin said:

For many of the Royal Marines in the team, this was their first operational tasking. It's good to see all of our hard work and training come to fruition in an operational environment where we are truly making a positive impact to regional maritime security.

CMF is a multinational maritime partnership that works to counter illicit non-state actors in the Gulf region, promoting stability and security across some of the world's busiest shipping lanes. The main focus is counter-narcotics, counter-smuggling, suppressing piracy and encouraging regional co-operation in order to promote overall security and stability in the region.

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