

# Royal Navy strikes £15 million blow to Gulf drugs trade

HMS Montrose, a Royal Navy ship operating as part of the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF), has seized over 1 tonne of illicit drugs in the Gulf of Oman worth almost £15 million.

In an operation lasting almost 10 hours, a team from the warship boarded a suspect in international waters off the coast of Oman and seized 663kg of heroin, 87kg of methamphetamine and 291kg of hashish and marijuana.

A Navy team including Royal Marines approached the small vessel on two Rigid Hulled Inflatable Boats before securing and searching the vessel.

The illicit substances were then brought back to HMS Montrose for analysis and destroyed.

This successful operation has prevented a large amount of illicit drugs from potentially reaching the UK and being sold on British streets. Organised criminals, often associated with the funding of terrorism, have also been denied a source of income.

## **Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:**

The Royal Navy continue to step forward with our partners in the Combined Maritime Forces to stamp out the smuggling of illegal substances.

As a result of this successful bust, our streets are safer and we have choked off a huge source of finance to international organised crime groups.

As a responsible nation with global interests, the UK is committed to playing our part in these international operations targeting the smuggling of illegal substances.

This is the largest Royal Navy drugs bust since [HMS Montrose seized 2.4 tonnes of illicit substances in the Arabian Sea last year](#).

## **Commanding Officer of HMS Montrose. Commander Claire Thompson said:**

Our enduring presence never wanes. Nine rotations into the forward deployed model, HMS Montrose remains as professional and enthusiastic as ever.

Starboard Crew's relentless efforts have resulted in a substantial

seizure of illegal narcotics and I am extremely proud of my team.

HMS Montrose has been deployed to the region since early 2019, actively supporting maritime security operations and multi-national task forces in the Middle East, and protecting the interests of the United Kingdom and its allies.

The warship regularly works alongside international partners which make up the 34-nation coalition CMF, which was led by the Royal New Zealand Navy at the time of the drugs bust. The leadership role has now passed to the Pakistan Navy.

The Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) is a multinational maritime partnership, which exists to counter illicit non-state actors.

**Commodore Adrian Fryer, UK Maritime Component Commander and CMF's Deputy Commander said:**

Working with coalition partners from Combined Maritime Forces, and particularly our Royal New Zealand Navy partners at the helm of Combined Task Force 150, I am delighted with HMS Montrose's successful narcotics seizure.

The Royal Navy's role in the region includes finding and disposing of illicit drugs on the high seas. This disrupts the finance revenues of organised crime and terrorist organisations, and the crew of HMS Montrose and the staff of Combined Maritime Forces should be proud of the work they are doing; it makes a real difference and I look forward to continued success.

**Royal New Zealand Navy Captain Brendon Clark, Combined Task Force (CTF) 150 said:**

This latest interdiction, CTF 150's first of 2022, is a further demonstration in the value of collaboration by CMF assets and follows a record-breaking year for the task force's counter-narcotics operations.

Through perseverance, dedication and professionalism, HMS Montrose has denied criminal and terrorist organizations the ability to use the funds from the sale of these illegal narcotics for illicit activity.

Last year's [Integrated Review](#) and [Defence Commander Paper](#) made clear that the UK is committed to tackling the threat from non-state actors including organised crime groups.