

5th Fleet Ships Free Sairdrone USVs from Iranian Navy Ship



File photo of U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, U.S. 5th Fleet and Combined Maritime Forces headquarters on Naval Support Activity Bahrain. *U.S. NAVY*

MANAMA, Bahrain – The U.S. Navy intercepted an Iranian warship that seized and detained two U.S. unmanned surface vessels operated by U.S. 5th Fleet in the Red Sea, Sept. 1, two days after Iran was unsuccessful in seizing a similar vessel in the Arabian Gulf, the fleet said Sept. 2.

Jamaran (FFLG 76), an Islamic Republic of Iran Navy ship, seized two Sairdrone Explorer unmanned surface vessels operating near one another in international waters before returning the vessels to the U.S. Navy the next day.

The unmanned surface vessels were unarmed and taking unclassified photos of the surrounding environment while loitering in an assigned patrol area at least four nautical miles from the nearest maritime traffic lane. The vessels posed no risk to naval traffic and had been operating in the general vicinity of the Southern Red Sea for more than 200 consecutive days without incident.

At around 2 p.m. (local time) on Sept. 1, U.S. 5th Fleet detected the Iranian ship approaching both unmanned vessels and removing them from the water. U.S. Navy guided-missile destroyers USS Nitze (DDG 94) and USS Delbert D. Black (DDG 119) were operating nearby and immediately responded. Nitze and Delbert D. Black also each launched an MH-60R Sea Hawk from Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron 48.

Nitze and Delbert D. Black remained on scene communicating with the Iranian warship to deescalate the situation and recover the seized Saildrones. The Iranian warship released the Saildrones at 8 a.m. on Sept. 2.