

Bahrain Conducts Fifth Sentinel Shield Exercise with IMSC; Includes Saildrone USV



Royal Bahrain Naval Force patrol boat RBNS Ahmed Al-Fateh (P20) sails in the Arabian Gulf during exercise Sentinel Shield on Aug. 23. *U.S. COAST GUARD / Electronics Technician 1st Class Jason Pickens*

MANAMA, Bahrain – Forces from Bahrain and the United States completed a joint exercise in the Arabian Gulf on Aug. 23, led by a nine-nation coalition staff based in the Middle East, NAVCENT Public Affairs said Aug. 25.

Royal Bahrain Naval Force ship RBNS Ahmed Al-Fateh (P20) and U.S. Coast Guard patrol boat USCGC Baranof (WPB 1318) participated in exercise Sentinel Shield with a Saildrone Explorer unmanned surface vessel from U.S. 5th Fleet.

Sentinel Shield is a monthly exercise series organized by the International Maritime Security Construct (IMSC) to enhance

communication and coordination among partner naval forces. This month's iteration was the first designed to integrate unmanned systems.

"The continued interoperability and coordination of U.S. and Bahraini naval assets are crucial to stability in the Arabian Gulf," said Lt. Vaughn Gehman, commanding officer of Baranof. "Integration of unmanned systems is a force-multiplier for IMSC and its ability to detect and deter malign activity."

IMSC was formed in July 2019 in response to increased threats to freedom of navigation for merchant mariners transiting international waters in the Middle East. Coalition Task Force Sentinel was established four months later to deter state-sponsored malign activity and reassure the merchant shipping industry in the Bab al-Mandeb and Strait of Hormuz.

The coalition is headquartered in Bahrain under U.S. 5th Fleet and includes forces from Albania, Bahrain, Estonia, Lithuania, Romania, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the United States.

"I was delighted to see our host nation participating in this month's exercise, and especially pleased to again see Bahrain leading the way in unmanned systems integration," said British Royal Navy Commodore Ben Aldous, commander of IMSC and CTF Sentinel.

In October, Bahrain was the first nation U.S. 5th Fleet partnered with after establishing a new unmanned systems and artificial intelligence task force. During a two-day training exercise, U.S. patrol craft and Bahrain Defense Force maritime assets sailed alongside Mantas T-12 unmanned surface vessels in the Arabian Gulf, marking the first time the platforms operated in regional waters.

"Incorporating unmanned systems into Sentinel Shield enables the coalition to plan for the future by developing and exercising concepts of employment that most effectively

utilize this new technology to benefit the Sentinel mission and strengthen our coalition," said Aldous.