

Cooper: U.S. Navy, Partners Put the Squeeze on Iranian Arms Shipments



Seized weapons displayed on the flight deck of a U.S. Navy ship in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations, Feb. 1. *U.S. NAVY*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The maritime forces of U.S. Naval Forces Central Command and their allied and partner navies have enjoyed considerable success in recent months in intercepting Iranian arms shipments to Houthi rebels in Yemen, the Navy's regional commander said.

“In fact, in just the last two months alone, five major interdictions at sea have resulted in U.S. and partner maritime forces seizing more than 5,000 weapons, 1.6 million rounds of ammunition, 7,000 proximity fuses for rockets, over 2,000 kilograms of propellant that are used for rocket-propelled grenades, or RPGs, and \$60 million worth of illegal drugs,” said Vice Adm. Brad Cooper, commander, U.S. Fifth Fleet and commander, Naval Forces, U.S. Central Command, speaking Feb. 13 during an off-camera, on-the-record briefing transcript of United States-Gulf Cooperation Council Working Group Meetings in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

“And these numbers are part of an overall two-year trend. In 202 – or rather, since 2021 we’ve seized over a billion – with a B – dollars in illicit drugs and nearly 15,000 illegal arms,” Cooper said. “The weapons were unlawfully headed to Yemen, as I think is well-documented.”

Also speaking at the council was Dana Stroul, U.S. deputy assistant secretary of Defense for the Middle East.

“Let me start out by saying we have seen no change in Iranian willingness or activities to transfer weapons to the Houthis, despite their work with increasing military cooperation with Russia for the war in Ukraine, number one,” Stroul said. “And number two, there has been a decrease in Houthi attacks against Saudi Arabia because of the truce that has been in place. Now, the actual truce has expired, and at this point in time, all sides are not resuming hostilities, though the truce has not been formally extended.”

Cooper also leads two major maritime coalitions, the 38-member Combined Maritime Force, which he describes as “the largest maritime partnership in the world,” and the 11-member International Maritime Security Construct.

“Everything we’ve accomplished both in recent months and over the last two years is the direct result of great work our maritime forces are doing, really, in two key areas, strengthening partnerships and accelerating innovation,” he said.