U.S. Navy Foils Iranian Attempt to Capture Unmanned Vessel in Arabian Gulf



Screenshot of a video showing support ship Shahid Baziar, left, from Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy unlawfully towing a Saildrone Explorer unmanned surface vessel in international waters of the Arabian Gulf, Aug. 30. *U.S. NAVY*

MANAMA, Bahrain – The U.S. Navy prevented a support ship from Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy (IRGCN) from capturing an unmanned surface vessel operated by the U.S. 5th Fleet in the Arabian Gulf, Aug. 29-30, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command Public Affairs said in a release.

While transiting international waters around 11 p.m. (local time), Aug. 29, U.S. 5th Fleet observed IRGCN support ship Shahid Baziar towing a Saildrone Explorer unmanned surface

vessel in an attempt to detain it. U.S. Navy patrol coastal ship USS Thunderbolt (PC 12) was operating nearby and immediately responded. U.S. 5th Fleet also launched an MH-60S Sea Hawk from Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 26, based in Bahrain.

The actions taken by U.S. naval forces in response resulted in the IRGCN vessel disconnecting the towing line to the USV and departing the area approximately four hours later. The U.S. Navy resumed operations without further incident.

“IRGCN’s actions were flagrant, unwarranted and inconsistent with the behavior of a professional maritime force,” said Vice Adm. Brad Cooper, commander of U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, U.S. 5th Fleet and Combined Maritime Forces. “U.S. naval forces remain vigilant and will continue to fly, sail and operate anywhere international law allows while promoting rules-based international order throughout the region.”

The Saildrone Explorer USV the IRGCN attempted to confiscate is U.S. government property and equipped with sensors, radars and cameras for navigation and data collection. This technology is available commercially and does not store sensitive or classified information.

U.S. 5th Fleet operates a network of manned and unmanned systems in accordance with international law. The integration of unmanned systems and artificial intelligence into fleet operations enhances maritime vigilance for U.S. forces and international partners in waters across the Middle East.