

U.S. Navy Ship Patrolling Middle East Seizes \$42 Million in Drugs



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MANAMA, Bahrain – A U.S. Navy guided-missile destroyer interdicted a fishing vessel attempting to smuggle \$42 million in illegal drugs while transiting the Gulf of Oman, April 21.

USS Paul Hamilton (DDG 60) was operating in support of Combined Task Force (CTF) 150 when it discovered the fishing vessel smuggling 802 kilograms of methamphetamine and 1,000 kilograms of hashish. CTF 150 is one of four task forces under Combined Maritime Forces, a multinational naval partnership

consisting of 38 nations.

Before U.S. Navy and Coast Guard members from Paul Hamilton seized the vessel, five smugglers on board attempted to discard 50 bags of methamphetamine weighing 35 pounds each by throwing the drugs overboard. Some of the bags were able to be recovered from the water.

The vessel's crewmembers identified themselves as Iranian nationals.

"This was outstanding work by the entire Paul Hamilton team," said Capt. Anthony Webber, commander of Task Force 55 and responsible for overseeing U.S. maritime surface operations in the Middle East. "These interdictions remove illicit narcotics from the high seas and help deter destabilizing activity in regional waters."

In 2023, maritime forces supporting CTF 150 have seized illegal drugs worth a combined estimated U.S. street value of \$150 million, adding to record-breaking drug interdictions by U.S. and international naval units in 2021 and 2022 totaling \$1 billion in value.

"I am incredibly pleased with the performance of our Sailors," said Cmdr. Jake Ferrari, commanding officer of Paul Hamilton. "We remain committed to delivering consistent maritime security and countering illicit activities and contraband smuggling in the region."

CTF 150 conducts maritime security and counter-terrorism operations in the Gulf of Oman and Indian Ocean to disrupt criminal and terrorist organizations and their related illicit activities, including the movement of personnel, weapons, narcotics and charcoal. These efforts help ensure legitimate commercial shipping transits the region free from non-state threats.

Combined Maritime Forces is the largest multinational naval partnership in the world whose partner forces operate in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Northern Arabian Sea, Gulf of Oman, Indian Ocean and Arabian Gulf to promote regional security and stability.