

U.S. Naval Forces Intercept Explosive Material Bound for Yemen



Guided-missile destroyer USS The Sullivans (DDG 68) and patrol coastal ship USS Hurricane (PC 3) sail in the background as Sailors inventory a large quantity of urea fertilizer and ammonium perchlorate discovered on board a fishing vessel intercepted by U.S. naval forces while transiting international waters in the Gulf of Oman, Nov. 9. *U.S. NAVY / Sonar Technician (Surface) 1st Class Kevin Frus*

MANAMA, Bahrain – On Nov. 8, U.S. 5th Fleet intercepted a fishing vessel in the Gulf of Oman smuggling lethal aid, including a large quantity of explosive material, from Iran to Yemen, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command Public Affairs said in a Nov. 15 release.

U.S. Coast Guard Cutter John Scheuerman (WPC 1146) and guided-missile destroyer USS The Sullivans (DDG 68) interdicted the vessel as it transited international waters. Patrol coastal ship USS Hurricane (PC 3) and Navy explosive ordnance disposal technicians from U.S. 5th Fleet's Task Force 56 also assisted during a weeklong effort to fully search the vessel and verify the type of material found.

U.S. forces discovered more than 70 tons of ammonium perchlorate, a powerful oxidizer commonly used to make rocket and missile fuel as well as explosives. This is U.S. 5th Fleet's first ever interdiction of ammonium perchlorate.

"This was a massive amount of explosive material, enough to fuel more than a dozen medium-range ballistic missiles depending on the size," said Vice Adm. Brad Cooper, commander of U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, U.S. 5th Fleet and Combined Maritime Forces. "The unlawful transfer of lethal aid

from Iran does not go unnoticed. It is irresponsible, dangerous and leads to violence and instability across the Middle East.”

The search also found more than 100 tons of urea fertilizer. Urea is a chemical compound with agricultural applications that is also known for use as an explosive precursor.

The vessel and its four Yemeni crewmembers were intercepted while transiting from Iran along a route historically used to traffic weapons to the Houthis in Yemen. The direct or indirect supply, sale or transfer of weapons to the Houthis violates U.N. Security Council Resolution 2216 and international law.

U.S. forces sank the vessel Nov. 13 in the Gulf of Oman after determining it was a hazard to navigation for commercial shipping. The four crewmembers were transferred to Yemen for repatriation Nov. 15 when The Sullivans completed an at-sea exchange in the Gulf of Aden with the Yemen Coast Guard.

“Alongside our partner forces, CENTCOM is committed to security and stability of the region and to deterring the illegal and destabilizing flow of lethal material into the region over land, in the air and the sea,” said Gen. Michael “Erik” Kurilla, U.S. Central Command commander.

U.S. 5th Fleet previously seized 40 tons of urea fertilizer Jan. 18 when guided-missile destroyer USS Cole (DDG 67) and patrol coastal ship USS Chinook (PC 9) interdicted another fishing vessel in the Gulf of Oman that had attempted to smuggle illicit weapons off the coast of Somalia months earlier.

The U.S. 5th Fleet operating area includes 21 countries, the Arabian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, Red Sea, parts of the Indian Ocean and three critical choke points at the Strait of Hormuz, Bab al-Mandeb and Suez Canal.