

Below is a statement released by the Combined Maritime Forces

Last week, while conducting counter piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden, HMS Portland detected, intercepted and boarded two suspicious skiffs preventing a possible pirate attack. In coordination with a Spanish maritime patrol aircraft, Portland identified, pursued and subsequently conducted a boarding of the vessels where they found articles that indicated the skiff had been involved or was about to conduct an act of piracy, and were clearly not those of an innocent fishing vessel.

"This is an excellent example of international coordination" said Commodore Tim Lowe, Deputy Commander, Combined Maritime Forces. "This international collaboration cannot be understated and as more countries join the fight, we will continue to work together to help deter, disrupt and thwart criminal acts of piracy in the maritime environment."

The skiffs, with 10 people aboard, were equipped with extra barrels of fuel, grappling hooks and a cache of weapons that included Rocket Propelled Grenades, machine guns and ammunition. Portland's boarding team, consisting of Royal Navy and Royal Marine personnel conducted the boarding. The ship's embarked Lynx helicopter, equipped with a machine gun and snipers, providing cover throughout the operation, while the boarding team was inserted using the ship's armed Rigid Inflatable Boats.

Due to insufficient evidence to directly link the group to a specific attack, the suspected pirates were disarmed and released. Having prevented this group of pirates from reaching their merchant traffic prey Portland destroyed one of the skiffs and confiscated all their weapons.

"HMS Portland has once again demonstrated the Coalition and Royal Navy's commitment to keeping the sea lanes open and making this key waterway safe for international trade," said Cmdr. Tim Henry, Portland's Commanding Officer.