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## U.S. Navy Rescues Iranian Fishing Vessel from Pirates in Arabian Sea

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From Commander, Naval Forces Central Command Public Affairs

ARABIAN SEA (NNS) -- Forces assigned to the John C. Stennis Carrier Strike Group, rescued an Iranian fishing vessel from pirates in the northern Arabian Sea, Jan. 5.

At approximately 12:30 p.m local time, an SH-60S Seahawk from guided-missile destroyer USS Kidd (DDG 100) detected a suspected pirate skiff alongside the Iranian-flagged fishing dhow Al Molai. Simultaneously, a distress call was received from the master of the Al Molai claiming he was being held captive by pirates.

A visit, board, search and seizure team from Kidd boarded the Al Molai and detained 15 suspected pirates who had been holding a 13-member Iranian crew hostage for several weeks. The Al Molai had been pirated and used as a "mother ship" for pirate operations throughout the Persian Gulf, according to members of the Iranian vessel's crew.

The pirates did not resist the boarding and surrendered quickly.

"The Al Molai had been taken over by pirates for roughly the last 40-45 days," said Josh Schminky, a Navy Criminal Investigative Service agent aboard the Kidd. "They were held hostage, with limited rations, and we believe were forced against their will to assist the pirates with other piracy operations."

According to members of the Kidd boarding party, the Iranian crew said they were forced by the pirates to live in harsh conditions, under the threat of violence with limited supplies and medical aid.

"When we boarded, we gave them food, water, and medical care," said Schminky. "They had been through a lot. We went out of our way to treat the fishing crew with kindness and respect.

"After securing the ship and ensuring the safety of all persons on board, we began distributing food and water to both the crew and the suspected criminals as is our standard practice in counter-piracy operations," said Schminky.

The pirates were detained on the Al Molai by the Kidd boarding party until the next morning when they could be transferred to the USS John C. Stennis where the matter will be reviewed for prosecution. The pirates currently remain on the Stennis.

"The captain of the Al Molai expressed his sincere gratitude that we came to assist them. He was afraid that without our help, they could have been there for months," said Schminky.

Piracy is an international problem that requires an international solution and a threat to all mariners. The presence of U.S. Navy ships in this region promotes freedom of navigation and protects the safety of those who transit the sea.



120105-N-ZZ999-002 ARABIAN SEA (Jan. 5, 2012) A U.S. Navy SH-60S Sea Hawk helicopter provides support to a visit, board, search and seizure (VBSS) team in a 7-meter rigid-hull inflatable boat, assigned to the guided-missile destroyer USS Kidd (DDG 100). The VBSS team boarded the Iranian-flagged fishing dhow Al Molai after the dhow's master claimed he was being held captive by pirates. Kidd's VBSS team detained 15 suspected pirates who were reportedly holding a 13-member Iranian crew hostage for the last several weeks. Kidd is conducting counter-piracy and maritime security operations while deployed to the U.S. 5th Fleet area of responsibility. (U.S. Navy photo/Released)

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The John C. Stennis Carrier Strike Group is conducting maritime security operations in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations while supporting Operation Enduring Freedom.

To view video shot from a helicopter during the counter piracy operation, visit <http://youtu.be/ZEFKv5EY2Sw>.

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