

Combined Maritime Forces

A 30-nation naval partnership

Combined Maritime Forces Hosts International Ship Board and Search Seminar

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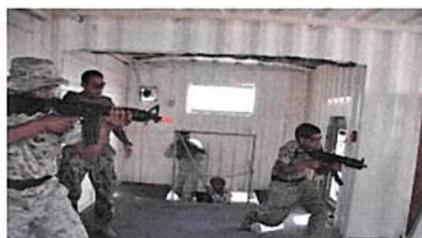
Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) has hosted personnel from eight nations at its headquarters in Bahrain at the Visit, Board, Search and Seizure Seminar, part of the International Mine Counter Measures Exercise (IMCMEX).



VBSS Seminar Participants Breaching the Ship-in-a-Box

The event, held over five days, saw 57 delegates from eight countries join staff from CMF and the US Coast Guard in training that covered all aspects of boarding ships. The seminar covered subjects ranging from the legal requirements that enable boarding's to take place through to the visit, board, search, and seizure (VBSS) phases involved in the boarding itself. CMF event coordinator Commander Oddgeir Nordbotten, Royal Norwegian Navy said:

“The aim of the Boarding Seminar is to share knowledge that has been built up by CMF and US Coast Guard personnel on operations that are conducted daily. We have some very experienced staff, and their aim is to pass on as much information on the visit, board, search, and seizure procedure as they can”.



VBSS Seminar Participants Clearing the Bridge of the Ship-in-a-Box

The delegates attending the seminar represented states from around the Gulf region and beyond, with participants from Bahrain, Djibouti, Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the Seychelles, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen. During the course of the week they were joined by Dr Mowaffak Al Rubaie, Member of Iraqi Parliament and General Lloyd Austin, Commander US Central Command.

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Lt Ladyga (USCG) greeting Dr Mowaffak Al Rubaie, Member of Iraqi Parliament

Delegates were able to join US Coast Guard staff from Patrol Forces South West Asia, the largest Coast Guard unit outside the United States, at their facility in Manama. Here they were given the opportunity to observe the Coast Guard demonstrating a range of drills employed during a boarding, from initial entry to the ship, to clearing compartments and finally interacting and negotiating with the ship’s crew. The delegates then took part in the drills themselves. All these serials took place in the US Coast Guard’s mock ship in the port, known as a ‘ship in a box’, made from three levels of stacked shipping containers to simulate a real merchant ship, complete with a bridge, an engine room and fittings to mimic what would be found on board. Commander Nordbotten said:

“We started with demonstrations of the procedures in the US Coast Guard’s exercise area, then moved to the training out to sea. Integration into IMCMEX, constituting a proper harbour phase preparation for boarding teams has never been done before”.



VBSS Seminar Participants Approaching BARANOF during the final boarding scenario

On the final day of the seminar Deputy Commander CMF, Commodore Keith Blount OBE Royal Navy visited the delegates to observe the final boarding scenario at sea. Boarding teams were drawn from the 57 delegates attending the event who then rehearsed boarding operations from rigid hull inflatable boats against the US Coast Guard Patrol Boat Baranoff. Commodore Blount said:

“I have been very impressed to see the way drills demonstrated this week have been taken on by the naval officers attending the seminar, and put to use in the final boarding scenario. I am really pleased to see so many professional naval colleagues from eight nations coming together in Bahrain to share their knowledge. CMF will continue to host boarding seminars as a way of enhancing the ability of CMF members and other regional navy and coast guards to tackle illegal trade and conduct maritime security operations. It is really important that we keep up this level of cooperation within the wider region and maintain this level of international engagement between neighbouring navies”.

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Cdre Keith Blount OBE RN addressing VBSS Seminar participants during the farewell ceremony

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About Combined Maritime Forces

CMF is a unique multi-national naval coalition, dedicated to promoting security and prosperity across 2.5 million square miles of international waters in the Middle East. CMF's main focus areas are defeating terrorism, preventing piracy, reducing illegal activities, and promoting a safe maritime environment.

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