US military sent explosive drone boats into combat for the first time



For the first time in its history, the US military sent explosive-laden drone boats into combat by attacking an Iranian midget submarine and naval port. The unprecedented use of such kamikaze sea drones by the United States comes nearly a decade after Iranian and Houthi forces first demonstrated such weapons.

The US military shared a video showing three “one-way attack surface drones” exploding after approaching an Iranian midget submarine and ship maintenance facility at Iran’s Bandar Abbas Naval Base on the night of July 12. US Central Command, the US military combat command responsible for Middle East operations, described the strikes in a social media post as the “first time American forces have employed sea drones in combat operations.”

The US drone boats were able to “make a low-speed, uncontested

approach” to their targets before exploding, according to USNI News, a news service from the nonprofit US Naval Institute. USNI News also identified one of the targets as an Iranian Ghadir-class midget submarine that was out of the water while being suspended from a gantry.

[embedded content]

Kamikaze drone boat attack.

The technology behind the strikes involved Saronic Corsair autonomous surface vessels developed by Saronic Technologies, a defense company based in Austin, Texas. The company’s website describes the drone boat as being 24 feet in length and capable of carrying up to 1,000 pounds over 1,000 nautical miles at a top speed surpassing 34 knots.

Such Corsair drone boats supposedly have the capability to operate autonomously without direct human control, including long-range navigation and patrol missions along with regulating power consumption and engine use to loiter at a specific position, according to a Saronic blog post. They are designed to perform a wide variety of missions and were likely equipped with explosives for this specific strike.

This marks the second notable US military use of drone boats during the war, which began with the United States and Israel attacking Iran on February 28, 2026. The US military already used a Corsair sea drone to rescue two US Army helicopter pilots in the waters off the coast of Oman on June 8, after their US Army AH-64 Apache helicopter was taken down by a cheap Iranian Shahed drone.

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