

Coast Guard Cutter Hamilton Returns Home After Drug-Busting Patrol



The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Hamilton returned home to Charleston after completing an 80-day patrol throughout the eastern Pacific Ocean on April 5. Crews offloaded \$324 million worth of cocaine and marijuana. U.S. Coast Guard

CHARLESTON, S.C. – The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Hamilton returned home on April 6 to Charleston after completing an 80-day patrol throughout the eastern Pacific Ocean, according to the Coast Guard 7th District.

The crew offloaded \$324 million worth of cocaine and marijuana April 3 at Port Everglades, Florida.

Hamilton's crew, along with an aviation detachment from the

Coast Guard's Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron, began their deployment in late January by serving as the first national security cutter (NSC) to participate in a Navy Composite Training Unit Exercise.

For three weeks, Hamilton integrated with the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower and ships and aircraft of Carrier Strike Group 10 to test the strike group's ability to carry out sustained combat operations at sea. Hamilton's commanding officer, Capt. Timothy Cronin, said the event highlighted the capabilities of the 418-foot NSC.

"Our success in this critical exercise demonstrated how the Coast Guard can seamlessly integrate with joint forces around the globe to advance our national security strategy," Cronin said.

During February, Hamilton deployed to the eastern Pacific as part of a partnership that falls under the Joint Interagency Task Force (JIATF) South, a component of U.S. Southern Command. JIATF South oversees the detection and monitoring of illicit traffickers and assists law enforcement agencies with interdiction.

Hamilton's crew seized three drug-laden vessels and apprehended eight suspected traffickers. Two of the vessels were semi-submersibles, vessels built low to the waterline to avoid detection. The two suspected smugglers purposely scuttled their vessel in an alleged attempt to prevent Hamilton's crew from locating any contraband. Hamilton's law-enforcement team detained the suspects and turned them over to the Drug Enforcement Agency for potential prosecution.

Hamilton also assisted in the removal of another seven tons of cocaine and 1,400 pounds of marijuana seized from a heavily trafficked transit zone by Coast Guard Cutters Legare, Vigilant, Tampa, Tahoma, Steadfast, Mohawk, Navy vessel USS Tornado, and the Canadian vessel HMCS Nanaimo.

Navy Deploys Medical Personnel to Support COVID-19 Response in New Orleans, Dallas



Master Chief Hospital Corpsman Thomas Holder, assigned to a U.S. Navy Expeditionary Medical Facility, directs bus traffic as Sailors prepare to deploy from Naval Air Station Jacksonville, Florida, to Dallas in support of the COVID-19 response. U.S. Navy/Jacob Sippel

WASHINGTON – U.S. Navy medical personnel assigned to Expeditionary Medical Facility-M (EMF-M) have deployed as part of a U.S. Northern Command-led COVID-19 response to support civil health authorities in existing facilities in New Orleans and Dallas, the Navy said in a release.

[See: New York Governor Asks for Comfort to Take COVID-19 Patients](#)

The first 50 personnel with EMF-M deployed to New Orleans on April 1, with about 60 more arriving on April 4. They will work at the temporary federal medical station at Ernest N. Morial Convention Center in New Orleans.

In addition, more than 170 personnel deployed to Dallas to work in a temporary federal medical station established there to assist local medical personnel.

Personnel assigned to Navy EMFs are trained to provide medical support, such as acute care and emergency care, and will work with local health authorities to support community need.

President Grants New York Governor's Request for Hospital Ship Comfort to Take COVID-19 Patients



U.S. Marines walk along Pier 90 in New York City as part of a security detachment supporting the Military Sealift Command hospital ship USNS Comfort. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Adelola Tinubu

ARLINGTON, Va. – The governor of New York, the state hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, wants the hospital ship USNS Comfort to switch missions and accept patients with the novel coronavirus ahead of an anticipated spike in infections and deaths.

At his daily news conference April 6 in Albany, N.Y., broadcast by numerous news outlets, Cuomo said he would call on President Trump to direct the 1,000-bed Medical Treatment Facility on board the USNS Comfort to start treating COVID-19 patients. Trump later granted Cuomo's request. A crew member on the hospital ship later tested positive for the virus, several media outlets reported.

[See: Navy Deploys Medical Personnel to New Orleans, Dallas](#)

[See: Coast Guard Oversees Disembarkation of Cruise Passengers](#)

The Comfort and the USNS Mercy, which was sent to help another overburdened medical system in Los Angeles, were designated as referral hospitals for non-COVID 19 patients, to allow local health professionals and hospitals to focus their attention and equipment, like intensive care units and ventilators, on COVID-19 patients.

However, the Comfort, docked in the Hudson River, has seen only a handful of non-COVID patients. Noting mandatory stay-at-home orders in the state, which have reduced auto accidents, crime and other activities that might require a trip to the hospital in ordinary times. “We don’t need the Comfort for non-COVID,” Cuomo said, “we need it for COVID.”



The patient transport team prepares to receive a patient aboard the hospital ship USNS Comfort while the ship is moored in New York. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Sara Eshleman

President Trump raised the issue April 5 at a coronavirus task force briefing at the White House. While the ship’s mission wasn’t supposed to be for virus treatment “at all,” Trump

said, "It looks like more and more we'll be using it for that."

New York State has been the epicenter of the COVID-19 outbreak in the United States with 130,689 cases and 4,758 deaths. The 800-foot-long Comfort, a converted oil supertanker, can provide a range of services such as general surgeries, critical care and ward care for adults. The ship wasn't accepting obstetrics or pediatric cases, for which it had no specialists or equipment. Walk-in patients weren't permitted, and ambulances couldn't take patients directly to the Comfort. Patients first had to be transported to a city hospital for evaluation, including testing for COVID-19 before they could be transported to the ship.

Pentagon officials announced April 3 that screening for care on the USNS Comfort was being modified and will occur pier-side to reduce the backlog at some of the nearby New York hospitals. The screening effort for the Comfort no longer would require a negative test, but each patient still will be screened by temperature and a short questionnaire. The Pentagon also announced that the 2,500-bed non-COVID facility set up in New York's Javits Convention Center would start taking COVID-19 positive patients.

Capt. Patrick Amersbach, the USNS Comfort's medical commander, told reporters in a teleconference April 2 that if the mission changed, all the Comfort's beds would have to be reconfigured to keep those with the virus far apart from those not infected.

"We understand that introducing COVID-19 positive patients into the FMS environments elevates the risk of transmission to other patients and our medical providers. This decision was risk-informed and made to ensure that DoD can continue to provide these local communities the type of medical care they most need. Force health protection is a top priority and our medical professionals will have the required personal

protective equipment needed for this mission,” the Defense Department announcement said.

The shipboard coronavirus relief operation in both New York and Los Angeles is led by the Federal Emergency Management Agency in coordination with U.S. Northern Command, Military Sealift Command and the U.S. Navy.

Navy Awards \$200 Million Contract to Upgrade USS Boxer



U.S. Marine Corps UH-1Y Venom pilots with Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 163 (Reinforced), 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit, demonstrate an unguided missile attack run at the amphibious assault ship USS Boxer during an air power demonstration. U.S. Marine Corps/Sgt. Adam Dublinske

SAN DIEGO – BAE Systems has received a \$200 million contract from the U.S. Navy to drydock and perform nearly 18 months of maintenance and modernization work aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Boxer, according to a company release.

The drydocking of the USS Boxer will be the first time the company's San Diego shipyard will use its 950-foot-long Pride of California drydock to service a large-deck warship. The shipyard is nearing completion of another major milestone for the drydock: the first simultaneous docking of two guided-missile destroyers on the West Coast.

BAE's San Diego shipyard will begin working aboard the 843-foot-long USS Boxer in June. Under the awarded contract, BAE will upgrade the ship to support and operate joint strike fighters on-board; perform hull, tank and mechanical work; and make other shipboard improvements. The shipyard is expected to complete its work aboard the 25-year-old ship in December 2021. The contract includes options that, if exercised, would bring the cumulative value to \$207.5 million.

Last October, BAE Systems simultaneously docked the USS Stethem and USS Decatur. The guided-missile destroyers are scheduled to be refloated together from the Pride of California drydock later this spring. The Pride of California, the largest drydock in California, can lift more than 55,000 tons.

Wicker Praises HII Contract

for Amphibious Transport Dock Ship



An artist's rendering of an amphibious transport dock ship. Huntington Ingalls Industries ARLINGTON, Va. – The earlier-than-expected April 3 award to Huntington Ingalls Industries' shipbuilding division of a \$1.5 billion contract modification for the procurement of the detail design and construction of amphibious transport dock ship LPD 31 was praised by a U.S. senator as a move to shore up shipbuilding.

Sen. Roger Wicker (R-Miss.), a senior member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, commended the decision to award the shipbuilding contract for LPD 31, which he said "was announced earlier than expected and intended to help the Mississippi shipbuilder mitigate the destabilizing effects of the coronavirus outbreak on its workforce," according to a release from the senator.

“This is great news for the dedicated men and women of Ingalls Shipbuilding and the many other suppliers who rely upon a stable rate of construction at the shipyard,” Wicker said. “The talented tradespeople in Pascagoula have been continuing the fight to get our Navy the ships it needs, even in the midst of the great uncertainty brought on by the coronavirus epidemic.”

LPD 31 will be the 15th in the San Antonio class and the second Flight II LPD, according to an April 3 release from Huntington Ingalls.

“In building this 15th LPD, Ingalls experienced shipbuilders will continue this hot production line of great amphibious warships for our Navy/Marine Corps team,” Ingalls Shipbuilding President Brian Cuccias said in the release.

Wicker worked with the other members of the Senate Armed Services Committee to authorize procurement of LPD 31 and provide incremental funding authority to the Navy in the fiscal 2019 and 2020 National Defense Authorization Acts, his release said. Both actions gave the Navy the flexibility to expedite the ship’s purchase.

The San Antonio class is a major part of the Navy’s 21st century amphibious assault force. The 684-foot-long, 105-foot-wide ships are used to embark and land Marines, their equipment and supplies ashore via air cushion or conventional landing craft and amphibious assault vehicles, augmented by helicopters or vertical takeoff and landing aircraft such as the MV-22 Osprey.

Coast Guard, Air Force, FEMA Deliver Medical Supplies to American Samoa



A U.S. Coast Guard HC-130 Hercules airplane crew on April 1 brought various medical and other supplies to American Samoa, including personal protective equipment. U.S. Coast Guard/Lt. Cmdr. Karl Savacool

HONOLULU – The U.S. Coast Guard and Air Force worked together with the Federal Emergency Management Agency to ensure the April 1 delivery of a shipment of personal protective equipment (PPE) to medical responders in American Samoa and the strategic deepwater Port of Pago Pago, according to a Coast Guard release.

“FEMA notified the Coast Guard of the need March 27, and we

worked collectively for a whole of government response to expedite the timely delivery,” said Capt. Craig O’Brien, chief of response for the Coast Guard’s 14th District.

[See: Coast Guard Oversees Disembarkation of Cruise Passengers](#)

The pallet of supplies arrived safely to the main airport in Tafuna on the island of Tutuila aboard a Coast Guard HC-130 Hercules airplane from Air Station Barbers Point, Oahu, on April 1, after earlier movement from the Strategic National Stockpile by the Air Force aboard a C-17 Globemaster airplane to Hickam Air Field, also on Oahu.

The services continue to support the CDC, state and local health officials for matters involving the pandemic and remains ready to respond to emergency needs throughout the region. Similar deliveries may take place soon to assist other regional partners.

Coast Guard Oversees Disembarkation of Port Everglades Cruise Passengers; 31 Medically Evacuated



A Coast Guard Station Fort Lauderdale boat crew escorts the cruise ship Zaandam to Port Everglades on April 2. The Coast Guard has been assisting in escorting cruise ships and cruise ship tenders in and out of the Ports of Miami and Everglades. U.S. Coast Guard

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Coast Guard on April 2 helped oversee the offloading of more than 1,200 passengers from the cruise ships Zaandam and Rotterdam in Port Everglades, Florida, according to a Coast Guard Headquarters release.

This combined with one remaining disembarkation being coordinated represents the processing of more than 120 vessels in the last three weeks to remove 250,000 passengers from cruise ships due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

[See: Coast Guard, Air Force, FEMA Deliver Medical Supplies to American Samoa](#)

The Coast Guard, under guidance from the U.S. Centers for

Disease Control and Prevention and working with Department of Homeland Security partners Customs and Border Protection and the Transportation Security Administration as well as state and local entities facilitated the safe landing, screening, quarantine and repatriation of these passengers. Many were brought to safe harbor in the U.S. when international ports refused entry.

“We commend the decision by the cruise industry to cease operations. However, pausing a global tourist industry does not happen instantaneously or easily.”

Vice Admiral Dan Abel, Coast Guard deputy commandant for Operations

Most of the cruise line industry announced a voluntarily suspension of operations from U.S. ports of call on March 13, and the CDC issued a “no sail” order on March 14 to all cruise ships that had not voluntarily suspended operations.

“We commend the decision by the cruise industry to cease operations. However, pausing a global tourist industry does not happen instantaneously or easily,” said Vice Admiral Dan Abel, Coast Guard deputy commandant for operations.

The drawdown of passenger operations is a major milestone, but it does not eliminate U.S. government concerns for cruise ships and their crews.

Today, there are 114 cruise ships, carrying 93,000 crew members, either in or near U.S. ports and waters. This includes 73 cruise ships, with 52,000 crew members, moored or anchored in U.S. ports and anchorages. Another 41 cruise ships, with 41,000 crew members, are underway and still in vicinity of the United States.

Boeing Extends Temporary Suspension of Puget Sound Production Operations

SEATTLE – Boeing is extending the temporary suspension of production operations at all Puget Sound area and Moses Lake sites until further notice, the company said in a release.

These actions are being taken in light of the company's continuing focus on the health and safety of employees, current assessment of the spread of COVID-19 in Washington state, the reliability of the supply chain and additional recommendations from government health authorities.

During the suspension, the company will continue to implement additional health and safety measures at its facilities to protect employees. These measures include new visual cues to encourage physical distancing, more frequent and thorough cleaning of work and common areas and staggering shift times to reduce the flow of employees arriving and departing work, among many other improvements.

"The health and safety of our employees, their families and our communities is our shared priority," Boeing's commercial airplanes President and CEO Stan Deal said.

The volunteers who have been supporting essential site and services work should continue to report to their assigned shifts. Puget Sound area and Moses Lake employees who can work from home should continue to do so.

As the suspension of operations continues, Boeing will monitor

government guidance and actions on COVID-19 and their impact on company operations. Boeing sites that remain open are being monitored and assessed daily.

Boeing assembles P-8A maritime patrol aircraft at Renton, Washington.

Attack Submarine USS Delaware Joins Fleet



Sonar Technician (Submarine) 1st Class Ryun Lewis (center) gives a tour of the Delaware last month to U.S. Naval Sea Cadets with the sub moored pier side at Naval Station Norfolk as the Virginia-class boat prepared for its April 4 commissioning. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 2nd

Class Cameron Stoner

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Navy commissioned USS Delaware, the 18th Virginia-class attack submarine, on April 4, according to a Navy release.

Although the traditional commissioning ceremony was canceled due to restrictions on large gatherings brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Navy commissioned USS Delaware administratively and transitioned the ship to normal operations. Meanwhile, the Navy is looking at an opportunity to commemorate the special event with the ship's sponsor, crew and commissioning committee.

“This Virginia-class fast-attack submarine will continue the proud naval legacy of the state of Delaware and the ships that have borne her name,” acting Navy Secretary Thomas B. Modly said in the release.

Vice Adm. Daryl Caudle, commander of Navy Submarine Forces, said he is pleased to welcome the ship to the sub fleet and contribute to Navy undersea warfighting capability.



The Virginia-class attack submarine USS Delaware transits the Atlantic Ocean after departing Huntington Ingalls Industries Newport News Shipbuilding division during sea trials last August. U.S. Navy via Ashley Cowan of HII

“The U.S. Navy values the support of all those who contributed to today’s momentous milestone and will look for a future opportunity to commemorate this special event,” Caudle said. “The sailors of USS Delaware hail from every corner of the nation and from every walk of life. This crew, and the crews who follow, will rise to every challenge with unmatched bravery and perseverance to ensure the U.S. Submarine Force remains the best in the world.”

The ship’s sponsor, Jill Biden, spouse of former Vice President Joe Biden, a Democratic candidate for president, offered congratulations to everyone who played a role in delivering USS Delaware to service.

“I know this submarine and her crew of courageous sailors will carry the steadfast strength of my home state wherever they go,” she said. “The sailors who fill this ship are the very

best of the Navy, and as you embark on your many journeys, please know that you and those whom you love are in my thoughts.”

Delaware’s commanding officer, Cmdr. Matthew Horton, said the commissioning marks the culmination of six years of hard work by the men and women who constructed the submarine and are preparing it to become a warship. He thanked the crew and their families, Jill Biden, the USS Delaware Commissioning Committee and the Navy League of Hampton Roads for their work and support.

“As we do our part to maintain the nation’s undersea supremacy well into the future, today marks a milestone for the Sailors who serve aboard USS Delaware. Whether they have been here for her initial manning three years ago, or have just reported, they all are strong, capable submariners ready to sail the nation’s newest warship into harm’s way,” Horton said.

This is the first time in nearly 100 years the name “Delaware” has been used for a U.S. Navy vessel. It is the seventh Navy ship, and first sub, to bear the name of the state. The boat is 377 feet long, has a 34-foot beam and will be able to dive to depths greater than 800 feet and operate at speeds in excess of 25 knots submerged. It will operate for more than 30 years without ever refueling. Its keel was laid on April 30, 2016, and was christened during a ceremony on Oct. 20, 2018. It is the final Block III Virginia-class sub before Block IV deliveries begin.

Fortem Ships New AI-Enabled

DroneHunter F700

PLEASANT GROVE, Utah – Fortem Technologies Inc. announced the shipment of the new AI-enabled F700 DroneHunter unmanned aerial system.

“In a world where jamming drones and drone swarms from the ground is no longer effective, the F700 stands alone as a safe, effective deterrent against the rising number of careless and criminal drones,” the release said.

The F700 is being used by the [Defense Department](#) and other international government agencies and has seen nearly 400 test runs.

The company said the “ultimate advancements of the F700 are its new flexible undercarriage, which offers interchangeable countermeasures for single, multiple or swarm-based threats and its new lightweight carbon fiber frame, enabling greater athleticism and speed.”

The F700 can carry multiple types of anti-drone countermeasures and deploy them in real-time, based on the dynamic threat that is detected miles beyond the protected area. The undercarriage features pogo pins and payload snaps that are integrated with artificial intelligence-enabled firing and flight software, according to the company.

“The F700 offers significant payload capacity to handle situations over civilians where zero collateral damage is a requirement,” the release said. “AI decisions are now made in real-time to select the appropriate effectors for the detected threat.”

“We have advanced the DroneHunter F700 so that it can deliver any ordinance necessary to stop drones and to protect stadiums, refineries, campuses and entire metro regions,” Fortem CEO Timothy Bean said in the release. “It is

the premier AI-enabled interceptor drone in the world.”

Fortem is developing several DroneHunter mitigation types, including directed energy.