

Cutter Returns Home After Seizing \$21.5 Million in Cocaine During Patrol



A Coast Guard Cutter Steadfast boarding team searches a suspected smuggling vessel on March 15 interdicted by the crew, resulting in 1,252 pounds of cocaine seized, worth an estimated \$21.5 million, and three suspected smugglers detained. U.S. Coast Guard

ASTORIA, Ore. – The crew of the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Steadfast returned home on April 17 to Astoria following a 65-day counter-narcotic patrol to the eastern Pacific Ocean, the Coast Guard Pacific Area reported.

The cutter intercepted and boarded five suspected smuggling vessels, including one go-fast-style panga, while patrolling

international waters off the coasts of Mexico and Central America. Steadfast's crew apprehended three suspected smugglers and seized 1,252 pounds of cocaine worth an estimated \$21.5 million.

"I am inspired daily by the tenacity and professionalism of this crew," said Cmdr. Dan Ursino, the Steadfast's commanding officer. "Their resilience to remain focused, in light of the global health crisis and uncertainty back home, has been nothing short of remarkable. Knowing the importance and impact of keeping these harmful substances from reaching our streets help to keep us going."

On April 1, U.S. Southern Command began enhanced counter-narcotics operations in the Western Hemisphere to disrupt the flow of drugs. Numerous U.S. agencies from the Departments of Defense, Justice and Homeland Security cooperated in the effort to combat transnational organized crime. The Coast Guard, U.S. Navy, Customs and Border Protection, FBI, Drug Enforcement Administration and Immigration and Customs Enforcement, along with allied and international partner agencies, play a role in counter-drug operations.

Steadfast also continued to participate in the Columbia River Maritime Museum's Mini Boat Project, which connects students from local Oregon elementary schools with their peers in Japan. Students learn about the significance of ocean currents and weather while building miniature boats to send across the ocean to one another. During this patrol, Steadfast launched two boats, Boat-A-Lohti and Philbert, about 200 miles off the southern tip of Baja, Mexico. Follow along [here](#).

Commissioned in 1968, Steadfast is one of two Reliance-class cutters homeported in Astoria. Reliance-class cutters are 210-foot long, 34-foot wide and have a 1,100 long-ton displacement. The ships hold a crew of 76 and have served the nation for more than 50 years.

Coast Guard Cutter Offloads 1,300 Pounds of Marijuana



The Coast Guard Cutter Kathleen Moore crew offloaded about 1,300 pounds of marijuana, worth an estimated \$1.1 million, on April 13 at Coast Guard Base Miami Beach. U.S. Coast Guard/Ensign Bruna Pavan

MIAMI – The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Kathleen Moore crew offloaded about 1,300 pounds of marijuana, worth an estimated \$1.1 million, on April 13, at Coast Guard Base Miami Beach, according to the Coast Guard’s 7th District.

The drugs were interdicted by the Coast Guard Cutter Harriet Lane in the Caribbean from a suspected drug smuggling vessel.

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Justice and Homeland Security cooperated in the effort to combat transnational organized crime. The Coast Guard, Navy, Customs and Border Protection, FBI, Drug Enforcement Administration, and Immigration and Customs Enforcement, along with allied and international partner agencies, play a role in counter-drug operations.

During at-sea interdictions, a suspect vessel is initially detected and monitored by allied, military or law enforcement personnel coordinated by Joint Interagency Task Force-South based in Key West, Florida.

The Harriet Lane is a 270-foot medium-endurance cutter home ported in Portsmouth, Virginia. The Kathleen Moore is a 154-foot fast-response cutter home ported in Key West.

On April 1, U.S. Southern Command began enhanced counter-narcotics operations in the Western Hemisphere to disrupt the flow of drugs. The law enforcement phase of counter-smuggling operations in the Caribbean is conducted under the authority of the 7th Coast Guard District, headquartered in Miami. The interdictions, including the actual boardings, are led and conducted by members of the U.S. Coast Guard.

Coast Guard, International Partners Seize 1,700 Pounds of Cocaine



Coast Guard Cutter Mohawk crew members conduct a boarding of the Amanda M fishing vessel in the eastern Pacific Ocean off the coast of Central America on April 9. During the boarding, the crew discovered several false compartments where they were able to uncover 1,700 pounds of cocaine and transfer four suspected smugglers to Costa Rica for legal action. U.S. Coast Guard

ALAMEDA, Calif. – The U.S. Coast Guard and Costa Rican authorities seized about 1,700 pounds of cocaine on April 9 with an estimated value of more than \$29 million from a fishing boat in international waters of the Pacific Ocean off Central America, according to the Coast Guard's 11th District.

While on patrol, a Coast Guard cutter's Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron MH-65 Dolphin helicopter crew identified a fishing boat suspected of smuggling narcotics and requested the assistance of a Costa Rican Air Surveillance Service (Servicio de Vigilancia Aérea) maritime patrol aircraft.

The Coast Guard cutter's small boat arrived on scene with the fishing vessel, Amanda M, homeported in Costa Rica, with four suspected smugglers and received authorization to board the vessel.

Coast Guard members discovered several false compartments throughout the fishing boat, where they were able to uncover 1,700 pounds of cocaine.

"This interdiction is a great example of what we can accomplish with strong international partners," said Rear Adm. Peter Gautier, the 11th District's commander.

The Coast Guard transferred the four suspected smugglers to Costa Rican authorities for further legal actions.

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Coast Guard: Illegal Fishing in Oceans a National Security Issue



Boarding officers from the U.S. Coast Guard and Canadian Conservation and Protection navigate to board a fishing vessel in the South Pacific in January 2019. Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans

WASHINGTON – Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU) is a national security issue that threatens global economic order and the sovereignty of nations and that enforcement is over-stretched to counter the threat, U.S. officials said.

IUU includes fishing without a permit, catching over a legal limit, catching the wrong species and catching fish that are too small.

To register and then watch this Sea-Air-Space 2020: Virtual Edition webinar live online, click [here](#).

Speaking during a Navy League Sea-Air-Space: Virtual Edition webcast on April 13, Rear Adm. Doug Fears, the Coast Guard's assistant commandant for response policy, said that

IUU “is an issue of sovereignty and a national security issue because the competition for global fish stock and protein is ongoing.”

Fears said the Coast Guard “is as an internationally trusted partner and is a supporter of an international rules-based governance structure that benefits each country that has an economic exclusion zone.”



Rear Adm. Doug Fears (left), the U.S. Coast Guard’s assistant commandant for response policy, and Dave Hogan, acting director of the Office of Marine Conservation with the U.S. State Department, discuss Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing during a Navy League Sea-Air-Space: Virtual Edition webinar.

Dave Hogan, acting director of the Office of Marine Conservation with the U.S. State Department, who also spoke during the Navy League webcast, said the State Department negotiates with international and regional partners to establish the rules to manage the fish stocks on the high seas in cooperation with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s Fisheries Service, the Coast Guard and other agencies.

“Each nation exercises sovereignty over

its economic exclusion zone,” Fears said. “When another nation violates that, [IUU] is harming the fish stock that may not be recoverable.”

Fears also pointed out that some nations are engaging in aggressive behavior against others in driving away fishing boats of other nations that are legally fishing and thus violating the sovereignty of those nations. He cited a recent example of Chinese coast guard activity against an Indonesian fishing vessel. The U.S. Defense Department on April 9 called out China’s coast guard for [sinking a Vietnamese fishing vessel](#).

“The United States Coast Guard has the authorities, the capability, the global reach – we’re trusted partners. Our model is a well-respected model. Our limiting factor is capacity.”

Rear Adm. Doug Fears

Hogan said the United States has an ongoing dialogue with China on IUU issues. He said the State Department has asked China to “do better” with its distant-water fleet fishing in the waters of other countries.

He said IUU fishing is going on in all the world’s oceans, and that the violators include stateless high-seas drift-net vessels in the North Pacific. Whereas most fishing companies worldwide are privately owned, China’s are state-run.

“The United States Coast Guard has the authorities, the capability, the global reach – we’re trusted partners,” Fears said. “Our model is a well-respected model.”

“Our limiting factor is capacity,” he added. “While we operate around the world, we can’t operate in all the places that deserve the attention in IUU fishing.”

Fears cited the South China Sea, the waters off West Africa

and the central and western Pacific and the Gulf of Mexico as prime areas where IUU occurs.

Hogan said the United States is still trying to find a multilateral solution to the competing claims in the South China Sea. He also said he encourages nations to cooperate, despite their disputes, so fish stocks aren't depleted and that their own economic security and the environment aren't undermined.

Fears said that IUU often is networked by organized crime, such as the drug cartels, which have "tentacles" in human trafficking and other smuggling operations. "A lot of the drug cartels and similar organizations monetize illicit activities, whatever they be," he said.

Fears also said a Coast Guard presence is an effective counter to IUU fishing but that the sea service needs more ships, aircraft and personnel to project that presence.

COVID-19 Piles on Coast Guard's Funding, Readiness Challenges, Says Commandant



Coast Guard Petty Officer 3rd Class Evan Grills is fitted for an N95 respirator at Air Station Kodiak, Alaska, on March 24. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, aircrews are taking additional measures to reduce potential exposure to the virus while also maintaining full mission readiness. U.S. Coast Guard/Petty Officer 1st Class Bradley Pigage

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Coast Guard, already facing longer term readiness and funding issues, is shifting manpower and equipment to meet the new challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic, the commandant of the Coast Guard told Navy League’s Sea-Air-Space 2020: Virtual Edition on April 13.

With the novel coronavirus also forcing the U.S. Navy, Marine Corps, Army and Air Force to come up with new ways to shield the force while still protecting the nation, Adm. Karl Schultz said his primary focus is on “maintaining a ready, healthy workforce to accomplish the Coast Guard’s primary missions” to facilitate the marine transportation system.

To register and then watch this Sea-Air-Space 2020: Virtual Edition webinar live online, click [here](#).

[See: As Part of Investments, Coast Guard Creates Major S.C. Base](#)

“Right now, we’re focused on people, readiness and enabling the economic prosperity and security of the nation,” Schultz said, noting the Coast Guard’s role as part of the Department of Homeland Security and its mission.

In addition to safeguarding the nation’s 355 seaports and 25,000 miles of commercial waterways as well as conducting maritime search and rescue and counter-narcotics operations, the constantly moving COVID-19 challenge has added new obstacles like offloading tens of thousands of cruise ship passengers, some of them ill with the virus. Coast Guardsmen [did so](#) April 2, helping to escort the cruise ships Zaandam and Rotterdam to port in Port Everglades, Florida.



Commandant Adm. Karl Schultz participates in the Navy League’s Sea-Air-Space: Virtual Edition.

Schultz also noted that there are between 75 and 100 commercial vessels in U.S. waters with as many as 100,000 crewmen on board who may need Coast Guard assistance at some point during the crisis.

Before the coronavirus outbreak, the Coast Guard was facing a readiness challenge with aging ships and aircraft, deteriorating infrastructure ashore and an information-technology system on “the brink of catastrophic failure,” the commandant said in his State of the Coast Guard address in February.

“But the focus right now is [a] ready Coast Guard, men and women, to get into the fight and get after these COVID-19 challenges that are in our wheelhouse.”

Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Karl Schultz

Schultz said thousands of Coast Guard personnel are now teleworkers because of social-distancing rules, but thousands more are still front-line operators in the air and on the water. “This is really showing just how critical this C5I [command, control, communications, computers, cyber and intelligence] issue is,” Schultz said. “Clearly there’s a money piece to this,” he added. “We’ve got to stop patching old systems.”

When he took command of the Coast Guard in June 2018, Schultz said his focus was on people – getting better facilities and equipment for them, an improved retirement system and recruiting for a more diverse force representative of the nation.

“People remains the absolute center of gravity for Coast Guard readiness,” he said in a live-streamed question-and-answer session during Sea-Air-Space 2020: Virtual Edition.

“But the focus right now is [a] ready Coast Guard, men and women, to get into the fight and get after these COVID-19 challenges that are in our wheelhouse,” he added.

The Sea-Air-Space 2020: Virtual Edition event was created after the annual live exposition had to be canceled due to a

prohibition against large gatherings in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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.

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,

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.

Bollinger Delivers 38th Fast-Response Cutter, Harold Miller, to Coast Guard



The fast-response cutter Harold Miller, delivered to the U.S. Coast Guard in Key West, Florida, on April 2. Bollinger Shipyards

LOCKPORT, La. – Bollinger Shipyards delivered the fast-response cutter (FRC) Harold Miller to the U.S. Coast Guard in Key West, Florida, on April 2, the company said in a release.

The cutter is the 161st vessel Bollinger has delivered to the U.S. Coast Guard over a 35-year period and the 38th FRC delivered on the current program. The Harold Miller is the third of three FRCs to be home-ported in Galveston, Texas.

“We are very proud to announce our latest FRC delivery,

especially given the unprecedented times and challenges which we're facing as a nation," said Ben Bordelon, Bollinger's president and CEO.

"For this reason, I want to commend the resilience and dedication of the 600-plus men and women who, despite the threat of global pandemic, continued to work safely and efficiently to build and deliver an exceptional, high-performance cutter to strengthen U.S. national security at a time when our nation needs us most."

"While providing the United States Coast Guard with an extremely capable and affordable asset, the Bollinger FRC program also provides tremendous benefits to the state of Louisiana, not only through highly skilled and well-paying jobs, but also through its direct and indirect spending, resulting in millions of dollars of economic benefits to the state," said Rep. Steve Scalise (R-La.).

Each FRC is named for an enlisted Coast Guard hero who distinguished themselves in the line of duty. Harold Miller, a boatswain's mate second class, piloted the first wave of landing craft on Tulagi Island in the Pacific Theater during World War II and made a landing against a Japanese force on Guadalcanal Island. Miller was awarded a Silver Star by Adm. Chester Nimitz for his heroic combat actions.

The FRC is an operational game-changer, according to senior Coast Guard officials. The class is consistently being considered and utilized for a broader mission within the Coast Guard and other branches of our armed services due to the success of the platform and the FRC's expanded operational reach and capabilities, including the ability to transform and adapt to the mission.

FRCs have conducted operations as far as the Marshall Islands – a 4,400-nautical-mile trip from their homeport. Measuring 154 feet, FRCs have a flank speed of 28 knots,

state-of-the-

art command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance suite, and stern launch and recovery ramp for a 26-foot, over-the-horizon interceptor cutter boat.

Cutter Stratton Departs for Eastern Pacific Counter-Narcotic Patrol



The crew of the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Stratton lines the rails of the flight deck as the cutter moors last November following a 162-day patrol in the western Pacific Ocean. The crew left again March 28 on a months-long deployment to the eastern Pacific. U.S. Coast Guard/Petty Officer 1st Class Matthew S. Masaschi

ALAMEDA, Calif. – The crew of the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Stratton got underway from Coast Guard Island on March 28 for a months-long deployment to the eastern Pacific Ocean, where the crew will patrol international waters off Central and South America to intercept and deter drug-trafficking efforts.

The cutter is currently conducting training and an at-sea health evaluation to ensure the crew is COVID-19-free and fully ready for operations.

“Times of crisis are when the nation counts on the U.S. Coast Guard and other military services to perform,” said Capt. Bob Little, Stratton’s commanding officer. “Cutter Stratton is capable of a wide range of homeland and national-security

missions that are vital during a national emergency. Our crew understands the importance of sustaining these missions now, more than ever. It's never easy to leave your families behind, and this deployment is no exception. Our families will be carrying a particularly large burden while we are away, but their resilience is at the center of our ability to provide maritime security for the nation."

In fiscal year 2019, the Coast Guard conducted 236 separate drug events, detained 611 suspected smugglers and removed more than 458,000 pounds of cocaine worth more than \$6.1 billion.

One in five global drug-related deaths occur in the United States, and drugs have since 2000 cost the U.S. \$193 billion in crime, health, safety and lost productivity annually. The drug trade also funds cartels' illegal activities in their home countries, spreading corruption and instability throughout the region.

The Stratton will be deployed in support of Campaign Martillo, The U.S.'s whole-of-government effort to combat drug trafficking and transnational organized crime, which includes efforts of 16 U.S. agency partners, including the Coast Guard, the U.S. Navy, Customs and Border Protection, FBI, DEA, HSI, and U.S Attorneys in California, Florida and Puerto Rico, New York, Texas, Alabama and Ohio.

Campaign Martillo also includes the participation of 21 nations who work together to counter cartels and illicit trafficking traveling via air or waters of the Western Hemisphere.

The campaign is led by Joint Interagency Task Force South, a component of U.S. Southern Command, which oversees the detection and monitoring of illicit traffickers traveling via air and seas and supports U.S. and multi-national law enforcement agencies with interdictions.

The actual U.S.-led at-sea law enforcement boardings are

conducted by trained Coast Guard members under the tactical control of the Coast Guard's 11th District, which is headquartered in Alameda.

"It is critically important the Coast Guard continues our lifesaving work during this national emergency," said Vice Adm. Linda Fagan, commander, Pacific Area.

"Our missions ensure the safety of Americans and the security of our maritime borders, and they enable the safe flow of commerce into U.S. ports. In this challenging COVID-19 environment, we have armed our members, like the crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Stratton, with the necessary training and equipment to prevent exposure to the virus, and we made sure their families back home are supported."