

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.

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."

Polar Star Completes 123-Day Antarctic Treaty Inspection, Resupply Mission



Rear Adm. Jack Vogt, commander of the 13th Coast Guard District, welcomes the crew of Polar Star to Seattle on March 25. U.S. Coast Guard/Public Affairs Specialist 3rd Class Michael Clark

SEATTLE – The 150-member crew of the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Polar Star returned March 25 to their homeport of Seattle following a 123-day deployment to Antarctica in support of Operation Deep Freeze, the Coast Guard Pacific Area said.

This mission marks the Polar Star's 23rd journey to Antarctica in support of Operation Deep Freeze, an annual joint military

service mission to resupply U.S. Antarctic stations, in support of the National Science Foundation, the lead agency for the Antarctic program. This year also marks the 63rd iteration of the operation.

The Polar Star crew departed Seattle on Nov. 27 for their sixth deployment in as many years and traveled more than 26,350 miles through the North Pacific, South Pacific, Indian and Southern Oceans.

"I am very proud of the tenacity of this Polar Star crew."

Capt. Greg Stanclik, commanding officer of the Polar Star

In the Southern Ocean, the crew travelled through nearly 500 miles of pack ice and broke through 23 miles of fast ice in order to create a nearly 18-square-mile navigable channel to McMurdo Station, Antarctica. Because of the efforts of the Polar Star crew, two resupply vessels and one tanker travelled to McMurdo Station unescorted in order to refuel and resupply U.S. Antarctic stations.

This year's operation required the construction of a temporary, modular mobile causeway to replace an ice pier, which disintegrated during Operation Deep Freeze 2018-2019. The modular pier required a three-day construction period prior to the offload of supplies, followed by a three-day deconstruction period at the conclusion of the mission.

Three resupply ships required 23 days to offload 19.6 million pounds of cargo and 7.6 million gallons of fuel during this year's operation, more than doubling the operation duration and capacity as previous years. Together, the three ships delivered enough fuel and critical supplies to sustain NSF operations throughout the year until Polar Star returns in 2021.

Among the cargo offloaded were construction materials for a

five-year, \$460 million Antarctica Infrastructure Modernization for Science (AIMS) project to recapitalize McMurdo Station, South Pole Station and other American outposts on the continent.

Additionally, the Polar Star crew also supported a team of U.S. government officials from the State Department, National Science Foundation, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and U.S. Coast Guard who conducted a five-day inspection of foreign research stations, installations and equipment in Antarctica.

The team inspected three stations: Mario Zucchelli (Italy), Jang Bogo (South Korea) and Inexpressible Island (China). This was the 15th inspection of foreign research stations by the United States in Antarctica and the first since 2012.

Inspections emphasize all of Antarctica is accessible to interested countries despite territorial claims and reinforce the importance of compliance with the Antarctic Treaty's arms control provisions. The U.S. will present its report on the inspection at the next Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting in Helsinki, Finland, in May 2020.

"I am very proud of the tenacity of this Polar Star crew," said Coast Guard Capt. Greg Stanclik, commanding officer of the Polar Star. "158 crew members earned the Antarctic Service Medal during Operation Deep Freeze 2020."

Coast Guard Cutter Alert

Returns After Counter-Drug Patrol, International Exercise



U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Alert sails near Puerto Chiapas, Mexico, while participating in a three-day North American Maritime Security Initiative exercise on March 1. U.S. Coast Guard

ASTORIA, Ore. – The Coast Guard Cutter Alert returned home to Astoria on March 15 following a 69-day eastern Pacific Ocean counter-drug deployment, the Coast Guard Pacific Area said in a release. The crew patrolled international waters off the coast of Mexico to disrupt the flow of narcotics and illegal migrants.

Alert's crew also participated in the North American Maritime Security Initiative (NAMSI) Pacific Exercise in and around Puerto Chiapas, Mexico.

NAMSI is a trilateral effort by forces of the United States, Canada and Mexico to improve mutual capacity for operational coordination. The three-day exercise focused on enhancing information-sharing and integrating capabilities of Canadian, U.S. and Mexican maritime forces during at-sea counter-drug interdiction operations.

“It was a great experience to participate in and be a part of such a culturally diverse operational exercise,” said Petty Officer 2nd Class Cristina Hickey, a Spanish translator and Alert crewmember. “I thoroughly enjoyed conversing in Spanish with my foreign counterparts and learning more about their missions.”

Crews from the Coast Guard Air Station Sacramento, Coast Guard Cutter Benjamin Bottoms, Pacific Strike Team, Pacific Tactical

Law Enforcement Team, Pacific Area/D11 command center and Joint Interagency Task Force South also participated in the exercise alongside Canadian and Mexican maritime participants.

“I’m proud of the hard work that our crew put into our Eastern Pacific patrol,” said Cdr. Tyson Scofield, Alert’s commanding officer.

“I am especially proud of the professionalism that the crew showed during our joint exercises with the Canadian and Mexican navies. They displayed a high level of skill while demonstrating counter narcotics interdiction techniques and during the shipboard launch and recovering of a Mexican helicopter for the first time. Most importantly, our crew created personal and professional relationships with their North American peers which will help to counter the flow of illegal narcotics into all of our countries.”

Coast Guard Cutter Tahoma Returns Home after \$12.5 Million Drug Bust



The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Tahoma works with an armed helicopter interdiction tactical squadron during a counter-drug patrol on Feb. 1 in the eastern Pacific Ocean. U.S. Coast Guard/Petty Officer 3rd Class Ryan L. Noel

BOSTON – The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Tahoma returned to Kittery, Maine, on March 12 after a 70-day counter-drug patrol in the eastern Pacific Ocean, the Coast Guard 1st District said in a release.

Tahoma's crew seized about 700 pounds of cocaine, valued at \$12.5 million while working with an armed Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron MH-65 aircraft on board.

The crew of Tahoma worked with several other Coast Guard units in the area to detain 27 suspected narcotics traffickers, and interdict 9,600 pounds of cocaine and 640 pounds of marijuana.

Tahoma's crew transited through the Panama Canal to conduct counter-drug operations under the tactical control of the Joint Interagency Task Force South in support of Operation Martillo. The operation involves 20 participating nations working together to counter transnational organized crime networks and illicit trafficking in the waters along Central America.

"The crew was outstanding in executing the counter-drug mission in support of Operation Martillo," said Cmdr. Michael Sarnowski, commanding officer of Tahoma. "I sincerely appreciate the contributions and professionalism from our detached teams while on this deployment."

Tahoma is a 270-foot medium-endurance cutter with a crew complement of 100. They conduct maritime enforcement and homeland security missions in support of Coast Guard operations throughout the Western Hemisphere.

Keel-Laying of Coast Guard's

First OPC Set for April



An artist rendering of the offshore patrol cutter. Eastern Shipbuilding Group Inc.

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Coast Guard plans to celebrate the keel-laying of the first Heritage-class offshore patrol cutter (OPC) next month in Panama City, Florida.

Testifying March 10 before the House Homeland Security Committee, Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Karl L. Schultz said the keel of the Argus, the first OPC hull, would be laid in April at the Eastern Shipbuilding Group Inc. shipyard.

The OPC is designed to replace the current fleet of medium-endurance cutters, which are between 30 and 50 years old. OPCs will provide a capability bridge between the national security cutter and the fast-response cutter. Each OPC will feature a flight deck and advanced C4ISR (command, control, computers, communications, intelligence and reconnaissance) capabilities.

Delivery of the first OPC is expected in fiscal 2022. The Coast Guard plans to acquire 25 OPCs. The damage inflicted on the Eastern Shipbuilding facilities by Hurricane Michael in October 2018 resulted in the sea service granting relief to the shipbuilder, reducing its planned construction to four OPCs instead of nine and deciding to re-compete the remainder of the OPC program.

Cutter Munro Returns After Counter-Drug Patrol; \$115 Million in Cocaine Seized



Lt. j.g. Michelle McGill serves as landing signal officer aboard the Coast Guard Cutter Munro as security response team members conduct fast-rope exercises from a U.S. Navy MH-60S Sea Hawk helicopter off the coast of San Diego on Dec. 16. U.S. Coast Guard/Ensign Brooke Harkrader

ALAMEDA, Calif. – The Coast Guard Cutter Munro returned home on March 1 after a 78-day deployment, during which the crew seized an estimated \$115 million worth of cocaine from suspected smugglers in the eastern Pacific Ocean, according to a Coast Guard Pacific Area release.

The crew patrolled known drug-transit zones of the eastern Pacific from late December to mid-January and interdicted three suspected drug-smuggling vessels that carried 6,680 pounds of pure cocaine.

The cocaine seized by Munro's crew and three other Coast Guard cutters was part of a nearly 20,000-pound haul of the drug offloaded in San Diego on Feb. 11.

This patrol was Munro's second deployment to the eastern Pacific since the cutter's 2017 commissioning. Last July, Vice President Mike Pence attended Munro's offload of more than 39,000 pounds of cocaine and 933 pounds of marijuana worth more than \$500 million. That offload included contraband found aboard a self-propelled, semi-submersible vessel interdicted by Munro's crew on June 18 that was carrying more than 17,000 pounds of cocaine.

Following February's offload, the crew began a multiweek tailored ship's training availability – a set of drills, inspections and exercises that assess a ship's mission readiness and damage control capabilities. The crew passed all 136 required drills, with an overall average of 97%.

“I truly could not have asked for a better crew with whom to share these memories, but we didn't do this alone,” said Capt. Jim Estramonte, the Munro's commanding officer. “Through all our adventures, the friends and family members of Munro's crew have supported us. It is their hard work at home that allows us to serve. Their sacrifice does not go unnoticed. So thank you to all those who make our success possible.”

Munro is one of four national security cutters homeported in Alameda. These Legend-class cutters are 418 feet long, 54 feet wide and have a 4,600 long-ton displacement. They have a top speed in excess of 28 knots, a range of 12,000 nautical miles, endurance of up to 90 days and can hold a crew of nearly 150.

Coast Guard Cutter Valiant Returns Home After 9-Week Caribbean Patrol



A family member holds up a welcome home sign as she awaits the arrival of the Coast Guard Cutter Valiant crew on Feb. 27 to their homeport at Naval Station Mayport, Florida. U.S. Coast Guard/Petty Officer 2nd Class Ryan Dickinson

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Valiant returned home on Feb. 27 to Naval Station Mayport after completing a nine-week patrol in the Caribbean Sea,

according to the Coast Guard 7th District.

The Valiant crew patrolled more than 11,000 nautical miles in the Caribbean supporting Joint Interagency Task Force South (JIATF-S) conducting humanitarian and law-enforcement operations, ultimately saving 23 lives.

While underway, the Valiant crew interdicted a 30-foot disabled and adrift migrant vessel attempting an illegal voyage to Puerto Rico, about 37 nautical miles south of Isla Saona, Dominican Republic.

A Coast Guard HC-144 Ocean Sentry Maritime Patrol Aircraft crew spotted the vessel and directed Valiant to its location. This interdiction rescued 19 migrants whose vessel would not have had enough fuel to reach its U.S. destination. The crew later transferred the Dominican migrants to a Dominican navy vessel for a safe return home.

Previously, the Cutter Richard Dixon crew transferred 50 migrants to Valiant from two separate interdictions. The Valiant crew transported six of the migrants to Ramey Sector Border Patrol Agents in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico, for federal prosecution on charges of attempting to illegally re-enter the United States. The crew then repatriated the remaining 44 migrants to the Dominican Republic.

In addition to interdicting migrant vessels, the Valiant crew conducted joint law-enforcement operations with the Belize coast guard and hosted a Belize coast guard officer aboard.

This opportunity gave both nations the chance to communicate and learn from each other while sharing different law-

enforcement techniques. As a result of the exercise, Belize was able to establish a presence further offshore in a suspected drug smuggling area. Throughout their patrol, the crew conducted law-enforcement operations with an embarked MH-65 Dolphin helicopter crew from the U.S. Coast Guard's Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron (HITRON) from Jacksonville, Florida.

Near the end of the patrol, the Valiant crew located two disabled vessels in a known drug smuggling area within a 24-hour period. The first was experiencing engine troubles and the other was out of fuel, and both crews claimed they had been adrift and without food or water for days. The Valiant crew rescued all four from their stricken vessels, embarked them onboard the cutter as search-and-rescue survivors, and transferred them to the Colombian navy for transport back to land.

"I couldn't be prouder of our crew this patrol as we plied the waters of the Caribbean for illicit maritime drug smugglers over the past two months in support of JIATF-S counterdrug operations, interdicting two logistics supply vessels," said Cmdr. Matthew Waldron, Valiant's commanding officer.

"Additionally, the crew demonstrated exceptional flexibility by quickly shifting gears from counter-drug to migrant operations and interdicting a disabled yola with 19 Dominican migrants bound for Puerto Rico in the middle of the night. Had it not been for the combined efforts of a forward-deployed Coast Guard Air Station Miami HC-144 crew, the Dominican Republic navy and Valiant, the individuals on that yola would have likely been lost at sea. ... That's 19 lives saved."

Coast Guard Interdicts Illegal Foreign Fishers in Pacific



A Coast Guard HC-130 Hercules aircrew from Air Station Barbers Point returns to Hawaii following a maritime domain awareness patrol in the Pacific Ocean on Feb. 20. The Coast Guard conducts MDA patrols routinely throughout the region. U.S. Coast Guard/Petty Officer 2nd Class Shane Christian HONOLULU – The U.S. Coast Guard interdicted several foreign vessels whose crews were fishing inside the U.S. exclusive economic zone (EEZ) on two separate occasions in the first two months of 2020, according to the Coast Guard’s 14th District.

“While we’ve seen incursions into the EEZs of partners and illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing on the high seas, these are the first interdictions we’ve had in the U.S. EEZ since 2012,” said Lt. Jason Holstead of 14th District Response Enforcement. “The combination of partnerships, electronic methods and putting assets on the scene to catch violators in the act is essential to deterring IUU fishing in Oceania.”

In both cases, the Coast Guard was conducting maritime domain awareness flights in the zones off Guam and Hawaii with Coast Guard HC-130 Hercules aircraft crews based at Air Station Barbers Point.

Case packages were forwarded to the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement for further actions. The investigations are pending.

The living marine resources (LMR) mission is one of two Coast Guard missions devoted to protecting fisheries inside and

outside U.S. waters. While LMR focuses on domestic fisheries, other law enforcement focuses on illegal incursions by foreign fishing vessels into the U.S. EEZ. An EEZ is defined as the region extending 200 miles beyond a nation's shores. The Coast Guard leverages partnerships and 13 bilateral agreements between the U.S. and other nations in the Pacific to enforce fisheries regulations and combat IUU fishing.

Fishing within the United States generates more than \$200 billion and employs 1.7 million people annually. IUU fishing represents an estimated monetary loss of \$10 billion to \$23 billion for legitimate fishers. Globally, commercially landed tuna and tuna products have a value of \$10 billion to \$12 billion per year to the fishermen who target these species and more than \$42 billion per year at the final point of sale. These conservative totals do not account for noncommercial tuna activity including sport fishing and tourism.

According to the Pew Charitable Trusts, the Pacific Ocean – also known as the “tuna belt” – represents 65% to 70% percent of globally harvested tuna.

According to the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), the international body that manages tuna fishing in the same waters, state fishers caught nearly 2.85 million metric tons of the primary commercial tuna species in 2014. This catch's worth was valued at more than \$5 billion to fishers in the region and more than \$22.68 billion at the final point of sale. Tuna caught in the WCPFC convention area accounts for more than half of the landings, dock value and end value of all commercial tuna fisheries.

While the Coast Guard is not the only agency responsible for protecting fisheries, it plays a significant role. The Coast Guard has enforcement authority over 202 separate commercial fisheries.

“While regulation compliance among U.S. fishers is near 97%,

some of the lowest policed areas, such as the waters in the western and central Pacific, are responsible for the highest percentage of significant violations. This is where the efforts of the Coast Guard 14th District and partners are so important,” Holstead said. “In 2019, we conducted numerous routine and analysis-based patrols throughout the region in support of IUU fishing detection and deterrence.”