

# Coast Guard Conducts Joint Operation to Disrupt Illicit Maritime Activity in Philadelphia



Coast Guard service members from Sector Delaware Bay lead a joint operation with partner agencies to ensure compliance with federal regulations at the Packer Avenue Marine Terminal, Philadelphia, March 11, 2025. (U.S. Coast Guard photo courtesy of Sector Delaware Bay)

From U.S. Coast Guard 5th District, March 14, 2025

PHILADELPHIA – A Coast Guard law enforcement team from Sector Delaware Bay led a joint operation with partner agencies to ensure compliance with federal regulations at the Packer Avenue Marine Terminal, Tuesday.

The joint operation included 27 officers. The goal was to

ensure the facility was in compliance with the Maritime Transportation Security Act while deterring and detecting illicit activity within a key port area. The team screened 121 trucks and containers resulting in a shipping container being detained for a hazardous material violation.

“Operations like this one are an important part of the Coast Guard’s mission of detecting and disrupting potential illicit maritime activity” said Capt. Kate Higgins-Bloom, captain of the port and commander of Coast Guard Sector Delaware Bay. “We are fortunate to have a great group of federal, state, and local partners here in Philadelphia. Working as an interagency team is one of the most efficient ways for us to secure and defend the ports and waterways that fuel our national economic security.”

This operation was led by members of Sector Delaware Bay’s response and prevention departments. Participating agencies included the Philadelphia Police Department and Transportation Security Administration’s Vehicle Intermodal Prevention and Response team.

The Maritime Transportation Security Act provides a framework for ensuring the security of maritime commerce and domestic ports. The act’s main goal is to prevent a transportation security incident which is defined as any incident that results in significant loss of life, environmental damage, transportation system disruption and economic disruption to a particular area.

“When we conduct these missions, we focus our efforts towards dismantling the exploitation of the maritime transportation system from drug trafficking operations and other maritime crime,” said Lt. Cmdr. Matthew Zangle, the enforcement division chief at Sector Delaware Bay. “Our partnership with local and federal agencies to disrupt the smuggling of narcotics like fentanyl and to deter illicit activity within the port not only increases our maritime security and

resilience but also ensures the safety of the general public.”

While conducting the operation, the Coast Guard’s prevention inspectors ensured compliance of federal regulations which resulted in the positive identification of improperly stowed hazardous materials inside a shipping container. The container was detained and released upon corrective action taken by the responsible party.

“What this operation proved is we have the know-how and interagency relationships necessary to get the job done and ensure a major point of entry in our country remains safe and secure,” said Higgins-Bloom.

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# **Coast Guard Cutter Reliance Returns Home After 60-Day Maritime Border Security Patrol**

From U.S. Coast Guard 8th District, March 14, 2025

PENSACOLA, Fla. – The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Reliance (WMEC 615) returned to their home port in Pensacola, Monday, following a 60-day patrol in the Florida Straits, Windward Passage and Gulf of America.

Reliance deployed in support of Homeland Security Task Force – Southeast (HSTF-SE) and Operation Vigilant Sentry (OVS) while underway in the Seventh Coast Guard District’s area of responsibility, where crew members contributed to safeguarding

America by patrolling U.S. maritime borders.

While underway, the crew assisted in the interdiction of 12 aliens attempting to reach the United States unlawfully by sea, including several young children. Crew members provided humanitarian aid and care until the aliens were repatriated to their country of origin.

Reliance maintained presence and directed operations for additional Coast Guard assets to deter dangerous and unlawful alien migration departures in the Windward Passage, which enabled other Coast Guard crews to assist with joint force operations for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)-led mission at Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

While at sea in the Eighth Coast Guard District area of responsibility, Reliance's crew patrolled the U.S.-Mexico maritime border in the Gulf of America to deter illicit activity such as illegal maritime migration, fishing and smuggling at sea.

Reliance's crew also worked with two nearby Coast Guard air stations to conduct flight operations and maintain critical ship-helicopter interoperability.

"I am enormously proud and impressed by the Reliance crew's exceptional professionalism, versatility and adaptability, which they demonstrated across multiple dynamic, high-profile and demanding missions during this patrol," said Cmdr. Aaron Kowalczyk, commanding officer of Reliance. "Their tireless commitment to the aggressive deterrence of alien maritime migration ventures and the relentless compassion displayed in their dedication to the Coast Guard's humanitarian mission was exemplary, once again saving countless lives while safeguarding our borders."

Established in 2003, HSTF-SE is the DHS-led interagency task force charged with directing operational and tactical planning, command and control, and functions as a standing

organization to deter, mitigate and respond to maritime mass migration in the Caribbean Sea and Florida Straits.

OVS is the 2004 DHS plan that provides the structure for deploying joint air and surface assets and personnel to respond to irregular maritime migration in the Caribbean corridor of the United States. Its primary objectives are to prevent the unnecessary loss of life at sea while deterring and dissuading maritime mass migration alongside our federal, state and local partners.

Reliance is a 210-foot, Reliance-class medium endurance cutter with a crew of 77. The cutter's primary missions are counter-narcotics and migrant interdiction operations, living marine resources protection, and search and rescue in support of U.S. Coast Guard operations throughout the Western Hemisphere.

For information on how to join the U.S. Coast Guard, visit [GoCoastGuard.com](https://www.go CoastGuard.com) to learn about active duty, reserve, officer and enlisted opportunities. Information on how to apply to the U.S. Coast Guard Academy can be found [here](#).

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**U.S. Coast Guard cutter arrives in Papua New Guinea, embarks law enforcement officers to conduct joint maritime patrol**



International partners from Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Indonesia, New Zealand, the United Nations, the European Union and the United States, stand on the flight deck of the Coast Guard Cutter Midgett (WMSL 757) in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea Mar. 6, 2025. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Jennifer Nilson)

From U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Area, March 12, 2025

PORT MORESBY, Papua New Guinea – At the invitation of the Papua New Guinea government, the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Midgett (WMSL 757) arrived in Port Moresby, Thursday, to embark Papua New Guinean law enforcement officers. This visit directly supports Papua New Guinea’s leadership in the Pacific Islands and its commitment to maritime security, specifically in combatting illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing.

Midgett’s presence reinforces the U.S. Coast Guard’s commitment to deeper relations with Pacific Island nations and regional stability. This collaborative effort marks the first

time a national security cutter, the U.S. Coast Guard's most capable law enforcement cutter, will conduct bilateral maritime law enforcement operations in Papua New Guinea's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), under the existing bilateral agreement that was signed in May 2023.

This joint patrol will represent a tangible demonstration of the bilateral agreement between the United States and Papua New Guinea, strengthening maritime governance within the Pacific and deterring illegal activities within Papua New Guinea's EEZ to promote the sustainable use of marine resources.

Midgett, commissioned in 2019 and homeported in Honolulu, is the eighth Legend-class national security cutter. These 418-foot vessels are equipped with advanced technology and a range of capabilities, making them ideally suited to support a wide range of missions, including maritime security, law enforcement, and search and rescue operations. Midgett's deployment to Oceania highlights the United States' enduring commitment to promoting a peaceful, secure, prosperous, and resilient Pacific Islands region

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**USCGC Polar Star Crew  
Concludes Operation Deep  
Freeze 2025, Departs  
Antarctica**



The crew of U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Polar Star (WAGB 10) stand for a photo while the cutter is hove-to in McMurdo Sound during Operation Deep Freeze, Jan. 7, 2025. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Briana Carter)

From U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Area, March 6, 2025

SOUTHERN OCEAN – Accomplishing its missions, the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Polar Star (WAGB 10) and crew departed the Antarctic region Tuesday, after 65 days south of the Antarctic Circle in support of Operation Deep Freeze 2025.

Operation Deep Freeze is an annual event, led by the U.S. Antarctic Program (USAP) in conjunction with the Department of Defense, to support the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF). The USAP advances the nation's goals to support the Antarctic Treaty, fosters cooperative research with other nations, protects Antarctic resources, and develops measures to ensure the wise use of those resources.

Operation Deep Freeze showcases a complex symphony of strategic inter-theater airlift, tactical intra-theater

airlift and airdrop, aeromedical evacuation support, search and rescue response, sealift, seaport access, bulk fuel supply, port cargo handling, and transportation requirements. Polar Star's crew performed icebreaking duties in McMurdo Sound, clearing routes to ensure safe passage for cargo vessels for McMurdo Station and New Zealand's Scott Base.

"The surface ice conditions in McMurdo Sound were abnormally light this year, a welcome change of pace from the extreme conditions experienced last year," said Capt Jeff Rasnake, Polar Star's commanding officer. "Operation Deep Freeze presented a number of challenges, beyond those inherent in maintaining and operating a 49-year-old ship to complete this arduous mission. We benefitted tremendously from a great deployment plan which allowed us to take advantage of favorable conditions and use the elements to stay ahead of events without pressing the cutter or crew excessively. That up-front planning made a big difference."

Polar Star also conducted a crew exchange with the New Zealand Defense Force ship Aotearoa.

"Operation Deep Freeze works closely with other Antarctic programs to include those of New Zealand and Australia, as well as their respective defense forces," said Lt. Cmdr. Rachel Rand, Polar Star's operations officer. "The ability to collaborate with others to achieve mission success and ensure the United States' vital interests in the Polar regions makes this assignment so unique."

Polar Star also worked with the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) to support a secure and sustainable Southern Ocean. Polar Star was the first United States surface asset to support CCAMLR. The crew's efforts to observe and monitor fishing and other activity on the high seas safeguarded resources and U.S. national interests in the Antarctic region.

“Each trip to Antarctica for Operation Deep Freeze requires careful planning and coordination due to the extreme weather and inhospitable environment,” said Rasnake. “The joint-agency teamwork within Joint Task Force – Support Forces Antarctica this year was outstanding and certainly lived up to the proud tradition of U.S. military support to the U.S. Antarctic Program in promoting security and stability across the region.”

The crew has transited nearly 16,000 miles since departing its Seattle homeport in November with stops in Honolulu, Sydney, and McMurdo Station. Polar Star celebrated its 49<sup>th</sup> year of Service to the Nation and visited Cape Polar Star in the northern part of the Ross Sea. Cape Polar Star was named after Polar Star for the scientific support provided by the cutter in the area during Operation Deep Freeze 86.

The Polar Star is the United States’ only asset capable of providing access to both Polar Regions. The Seattle-based cutter is a 399-foot heavy polar icebreaker commissioned in 1976, weighing 13,500 tons and is 84-feet wide with a 34-foot draft. The cutter’s six diesel and three gas turbine engines produce up to 75,000 horsepower.

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**Coast Guard Offloads Over \$141M in Illicit Drugs Interdicted in Caribbean Sea**



Crew members from USCGC Valiant (WMEC 621) stand at parade rest in front of interdicted narcotics at Base Miami Beach, Florida, Mar. 6, 2025. The Valiant's crew secured the illegal drugs from six interdictions in the international waters of the Caribbean. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Nicholas Strasburg)

From U.S. Coast Guard District 7, March 6, 2025

MIAMI – U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Valiant's crew offloaded approximately 12,470 pounds of cocaine, Thursday, worth an estimated \$141.4 million at Coast Guard Base Miami Beach.

The seized contraband was the result of six interdictions in the Caribbean Sea, and 17 suspected smugglers were transferred ashore to face federal prosecution in U.S. courts.

"These seizures are a testament to the Coast Guard's continued dedication to safeguard America by securing our maritime borders," said Lt. j.g. Jesus Martinez Borges, a Seventh Coast Guard District enforcement officer. "The Coast Guard and our partners work tirelessly to deny drug trafficking organizations access to smuggling routes bound for the United

States. Our efforts contribute to federal investigations and prosecutions that further seek to disrupt and dismantle transnational criminal activity abroad, which threaten Americans here at home.”

On Feb. 2, a Dutch Caribbean Coast Guard aircrew detected a suspicious vessel in international waters approximately 30 miles north of Venezuela. The Netherlands Royal Navy ship HNLMS Groningen crew, with an embarked U.S. Coast Guard law enforcement detachment 105 crew, interdicted a go-fast vessel, apprehending five suspected smugglers and seizing approximately 6,220 pounds of cocaine.

That same day, a forward-deployed HC-144 Ocean Sentry aircrew from Coast Guard Air Station Miami detected a suspicious vessel in international waters approximately 35 miles southwest of the U.S. Virgin Islands. The aircrew vectored in U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Joseph Doyle’s crew who interdicted the go-fast vessel, apprehending three suspected smugglers and seizing approximately 2,200 pounds of cocaine.

“I am proud of the dedication and professionalism demonstrated by the crew of Coast Guard Cutter Joseph Doyle in securing our maritime border,” said Lt. Cmdr. David Radin, commanding officer of Joseph Doyle. “It was a smooth operation working with Air Station Miami’s forward-deployed aircraft to detect these traffickers, which enabled our crew to interdict and prevent these deadly narcotics from reaching our nation’s borders.”

On Feb. 14, a Dutch maritime patrol aircrew located a suspicious vessel in international waters approximately 18 miles north of Venezuela. The Groningen crew deployed two small boats with an embarked U.S. Coast Guard LEDET 105 crew to interdict the vessel. The go-fast vessel jettisoned bales of contraband during the pursuit and fled into Venezuelan territorial waters. The Groningen crew recovered the approximate 571 pounds of cocaine.

On Feb. 17, a U.S. Customs and Border Protection Air and Marine Operations aircrew detected a suspicious vessel in international waters approximately 50 miles northeast of the Dominican Republic. The aircrew vectored in the Valiant crew who interdicted the go-fast vessel, apprehending five suspected smugglers and seizing approximately 1,280 pounds of cocaine.

“The Valiant crew’s interdiction is one of many law enforcement actions highlighting the time-tested partnership and outstanding coordination of the Seventh Coast Guard District, Coast Guard Sector San Juan, and U.S. Customs and Border Protection Caribbean Air and Marine Branch,” said Cmdr. Matthew Press, commanding officer of Valiant.

“AMO continues to predict, detect, identify, classify, track, deter and interdict threats through the coordinated application of aviation and maritime law enforcement resources within the air and sea,” said Christopher Hunter, director of CBP Air and Marine Operations in the Caribbean.

Tuesday, a Dutch maritime patrol aircrew notified the HNLMS Groningen crew of a suspicious vessel in international waters approximately 120 miles northwest of Aruba. The Groningen crew launched a helicopter aircrew who signaled the non-compliant go-fast vessel and employed warning shots to compel the suspected smugglers to stop with no injuries reported. The Groningen crew apprehended two suspected smugglers and seized approximately 545 pounds of cocaine.

Saturday, a Caribbean maritime patrol aircrew notified the Royal Canadian Navy ship HMCS Harry DeWolf’s crew of a suspicious vessel in international waters approximately 176 miles north of Cabo De La Vela, Colombia. The Harry DeWolf crew and an embarked U.S. Coast Guard LEDET 402 crew intercepted the go-fast vessel, apprehending three suspected smugglers and seizing approximately 1,650 pounds of cocaine.

The following assets and crews were involved in the interdiction operations:

- [U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Valiant \(WMEC 621\)](#)
- [U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Joseph Doyle \(WPC 1133\)](#)
- [Royal Netherlands Navy HNLMS Groningen \(P 843\)](#)
- [Royal Canadian Navy HMCS Harry DeWolf \(430\)](#)
- U.S. Coast Guard Tactical Law Enforcement Team South
- U.S. Coast Guard Tactical Law Enforcement Team Pacific
- [U.S. Customs and Border Protection Air and Marine Operations \(CBP-AMO\)](#)
- [Joint Interagency Task Force-South \(JIATF-South\)](#)
- [U.S. Coast Guard Sector San Juan](#)
- [Seventh Coast Guard District](#)

Detecting and interdicting illicit drug traffickers on the high seas involves significant interagency and international coordination. Joint Interagency Task Force-South, in Key West, conducts the detection and monitoring of aerial and maritime

transit of illegal drugs. Once an interdiction becomes imminent, the law enforcement phase of the operation begins, and control of the operation shifts to the U.S. Coast Guard for the interdiction and apprehension phases. Interdictions in the Caribbean Sea are performed by members of the U.S. Coast Guard under the authority and control of the Seventh Coast Guard District, headquartered in Miami.

These interdictions relate to Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces' (OCDETF) Strike Force initiatives and designated investigations. OCDETF identifies, disrupts, and dismantles the highest-level criminal organizations that threaten the United States using a prosecutor-led, intelligence-driven, multi-agency approach. Additional information about the OCDETF program can be found at <https://www.justice.gov/OCDETF>.

USCGC Valiant is a 210-foot Reliance-class medium endurance cutter homeported at U.S. Naval Station Mayport in Jacksonville under [U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area Command](#).

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## **Unified Response: An Inside Look at 300 Coast Guardsmen responding to Potomac Plane Crash**



U.S. Coast Guard Petty Officer 2nd Class Lance Ide, left, and Petty Officer 3rd Class Corbin Singleton, boatswain's mates at Station St. Inigoes, respond to the aircraft collision on the Potomac River, Washington, Jan. 30, 2025. The Coast Guard responded to the incident with local, city, state and federal partners. *Photo credit: U.S. Coast Guard | Petty Officer 3rd Class Christopher Bokum*

WASHINGTON – On the evening of January 29, while most of the city slept, hundreds of Coast Guardsmen from across the East Coast deployed to the Potomac River, ready to face the unimaginable.

Crew members launched from Coast Guard Station Washington and arrived at the freezing river as a commercial jet and Army helicopter lay shattered.

For those directing first responders from the command center at Sector Maryland – National Capital Region, managing the unimaginable is a part of the job.

“Having also responded to the Key Bridge collapse last year, this aircraft collision was another heartbreaking reminder of

how quickly tragedy can unfold,” said Sector Maryland – National Capital Region command center chief Lieutenant Stasia Ellis. “Our thoughts still go out to the families who lost loved ones. Coast Guard first responders demonstrated exceptional courage and dedication, working tirelessly alongside our partners to bring answers and closure to those affected.”

By 5 a.m., Station Philadelphia was traveling over 100 miles to Washington in support of the mission.

At dawn, response boat crews from Stations Curtis Bay, Annapolis, Oxford, Crisfield and Coast Guard Cutter Sailfish were on scene.

In a unified effort, 278 Coast Guard service members and Auxiliarists from 33 units across the East Coast responded to the incident with an urgent mission – search, recover, and bring closure to a nation reeling from disaster.

Within hours after the incident, Sector Maryland – National Capital Region and subordinate commands stood up an Incident Management Team at Station Washington to coordinate the mission and streamline real-time communications.

“We came from over 70 miles away that morning before sunrise, not really sure what to expect on-scene,” said Petty Officer 3rd Class Corbin Singleton, a machinery technician with Station St. Inigoes. “Whether it was search and rescue or enforcing the safety zone, we were determined to help and support the mission however we could.”

As Singleton and his crew supported the mission from the water, Captain Patrick Burkett, commander, Sector Maryland – National Capital Region, welcomed the acting commandant, Admiral Kevin E. Lunday, and the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, Kristi Noem, to meet with first responders at Station Washington.

Shortly after 10 a.m., Lunday and Noem were underway visiting the wreckage site on a Station Washington small boat.

“There were a lot of moving parts that morning as traumatic as it was, but I am so incredibly proud of our team’s efforts throughout this response,” said Burkett. “From the moment the accident took place, we’ve been here to support the American public.”

The Coast Guard rapidly integrated into the incident unified command to support local, city, state, and federal partners.

Beyond search and rescue, the Coast Guard’s objectives included ensuring the safety of the public and first responders on the water, aiding in victim recovery efforts, assisting salvage operations, and supporting the National Transportation Safety Board’s incident investigation.

“We put all available resources to bear on this response,” said Burkett. “We had many Coast Guard small boat stations and cutters arrive at the scene that morning and days after. We called in additional crews to help from Sector Delaware Bay to make sure we kept a 24/7 presence on the waterway and support by any means we could.”

A week after the accident, a total of 11 small boat stations and five cutters were deployed, including support from two Coast Guard sectors, Coast Guard headquarters, and the Coast Guard Auxiliary.

“We worked together as a unified command,” said Burkett. “Everybody has their responsibilities from our responding units to the agencies in the unified command. We worked as a team to ensure we got the mission accomplished. This is what we do. This is what we train to do. That’s why we train with our partner agencies here in the greater Washington area to prepare for these types of tragedies.”

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# President Says Military Recruiting Up, So Too Will Be American Shipbuilding, 'Golden Dome'

March 5, 2025 | By C. Todd Lopez, DoD News

During his first address to a joint session of Congress, March 4, 2025, President Donald J. Trump said that the changes he's made since his inauguration in January have enhanced recruiting within the U.S. military in ways that haven't been seen in years.

On his first day in office, the president signed an executive order ending diversity, equity and inclusion programs across the federal government. Less than a week later, newly sworn-in Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth drafted a message to the force that mirrored the president's words, saying he would rebuild the U.S. military with a focus on lethality, meritocracy, accountability, standards and readiness.

"Our service members won't be activists and ideologues," Trump said. "They will be fighters and warriors. They will fight for our country."

The president said the result of his executive order has filtered down into the armed forces, putting a new focus on merit and spurring renewed interest in serving.

"I am pleased to report that in January, the U.S. Army had its single best recruiting month in 15 years and that all armed services are having among the best recruiting results ever in

the history of our services,” Trump said. “What a tremendous turnaround. It’s really a beautiful thing to see people love our country again ... they love our country, and they love being in our military again.”

The president also said the United States will pursue a “Golden Dome,” similar to Israel’s own “Iron Dome” defense system, which is designed to protect against inbound missile attacks.

“My focus is on building the most powerful military of the future,” Trump said. “As a first step, I’m asking Congress to fund a state-of-the-art, ‘Golden Dome’ missile defense shield to protect our homeland – all made in the USA.”

The president said that President Ronald Reagan had wanted to build a similar system during his term, but the technology wasn’t available at the time to bring that project to fruition. But now, he said, that technology exists.

“Israel has it, other places have it, and the United States should have it, too,” he said. “This is a very dangerous world. We should have it. We want to be protected. And we’re going to protect our citizens like never before.”

Trump also promised an expansion of American shipbuilding in order to support both the U.S. military and the commercial sector. American shipbuilding is at a low point today, but the president promised new efforts to increase America’s shipbuilding efforts.

“We are also going to resurrect the American shipbuilding industry, including commercial shipbuilding and military shipbuilding,” Trump said. “I am announcing tonight that we will create a new Office of Shipbuilding in the White House and offer special tax incentives to bring this industry home to America, where it belongs.”

The president said the U.S. once had a great domestic

shipbuilding industry, which has largely died down now. That will change, he promised.

“We used to make so many ships. We don’t make them anymore, very much,” he said. “But we’re going to make them very fast, very soon.”

The president also said he planned to take action to expand domestic production of rare earth elements, which are critical to U.S. defense.

“Later this week, I will also take historic action to dramatically expand production of critical minerals and rare earths here in the USA,” he said.

Rare earth permanent magnets, for instance, are not only essential components in a range of defense capabilities, including the F-35 Lightning II aircraft, Virginia and Columbia class submarines and unmanned aerial vehicles, but are also a critical part of commercial applications in the United States. They are also used to generate electricity for electronic systems in aircraft and focus microwave energy in radar systems.

Finally, Trump said that the mastermind behind the terrorist attack at Abbey Gate during the August 2021 withdrawal from Afghanistan has been captured. Some 13 American service members were killed during that attack.

“I am pleased to announce that we have just apprehended the top terrorist responsible for that atrocity, and he is right now on his way here to face the swift sword of American justice,” Trump said.

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# Coast Guard Teams Deploy to American Samoa to Patrol Border, Conduct Boardings



A U.S. Coast Guardsman assigned to a Coast Guard Sector Honolulu boarding team, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Office of Law Enforcement officer and American Samoa Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources officer speak to the master of a foreign-flagged fishing vessel during a boarding offshore Pago Pago, American Samoa, Feb. 26, 2025. (U.S. Coast Guard photo, courtesy Sector Honolulu)

From Coast Guard District 14 External Affairs, March 4, 2025

HONOLULU – Coast Guard Maritime Safety and Security Team Honolulu personnel and a boarding team from Coast Guard Sector Honolulu deployed to American Samoa from Feb. 10-27 to protect the U.S. maritime border, enforce U.S. laws and regulations, enhance maritime domain awareness and coordinate with agency partners.

During the deployment, team members boarded six U.S.-flagged commercial fishing vessels, six foreign-flagged commercial fishing vessels, and five recreational boating safety boardings, resulting in the termination of one recreational voyage due to deficient safety equipment.

Crews patrolled the U.S. territorial maritime border and the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone surrounding American Samoa, which extends up to 200 miles offshore.

Additionally, MSST Honolulu and Sector Honolulu personnel conducted over 26 hours of training with the American Samoa Department of Homeland Security and American Samoa Marine Patrol, a law enforcement unit within the [American Samoa Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources](#). Training primarily focused on boarding procedures and weapons proficiency.

“Working closely with partners in American Samoa heightens our awareness of any illicit activities in the area and hones our combined ability to safeguard the maritime border,” said Lt. Cmdr. Nic Iannarone, enforcement division chief, Sector Honolulu. “Teamwork is a key component of taking a stand against threats to our ports and waterways.”

In accordance with the President’s Executive Orders and direction from Adm. Kevin Lunday, the acting commandant of the Coast Guard, the Coast Guard is increasing cutter patrols and operations in American Samoa. The Coast Guard is surging assets to increase presence in key areas to protect America’s maritime borders, territorial integrity, and sovereignty.

Maritime Safety and Security Team Honolulu is a specialized unit of the Coast Guard dedicated to enhancing maritime security and safety in the Pacific region. With a highly trained personnel team equipped to conduct law enforcement operations, port security assessments, and emergency response activities, MSST Honolulu collaborates closely with local,

state, and federal agencies to safeguard vital maritime infrastructure and natural resources.

Sector Honolulu serves a broad expanse of the Pacific that includes 200 nautical miles surrounding the State of Hawaii, the islands and atolls of the Hawaiian Island Chain and American Samoa. The sector's primary missions include ensuring maritime security, conducting search and rescue operations, enforcing environmental protection laws, and facilitating law enforcement activities.

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# **USCGC Vigorous Returns After Alien Interdiction Operations, Maritime Border Security Patrol**



Coast Guard Cutter Vigorous' crew transfers aliens to the Margaret Norvell in the Florida Straits, Feb. 19, 2025. The aliens were transferred to The Bahamas following an illegal maritime venture interdiction off Key Biscayne, Florida. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Chief Petty Officer Ryan Youngblood)  
From U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area, March 5, 2025

PORTSMOUTH, Va. – The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Vigorous (WMEC 627) returned to their homeport in Portsmouth, Wednesday, following a 46-day maritime border security patrol in the Florida Straits.

Vigorous deployed in support of Homeland Security Task Force – Southeast and Operation Vigilant Sentry while underway in the Seventh Coast Guard District's area of responsibility, where crew members conducted alien interdiction and border security operations. The crew worked alongside other Coast Guard units and partner agencies such as U.S. Customs and Border Protection – Air and Marine Operations and Homeland Security Investigations.

Throughout the patrol, Vigorous' crew interdicted, processed and repatriated more than 67 aliens attempting to enter the United States illegally, and transferred six suspected smugglers ashore to HSI custody to support further investigation for potential federal prosecution.

While at sea, the cutter participated in five interdictions of vessels attempting to smuggle aliens into the U.S. illegally. The aliens interdicted were from multiple countries including Honduras, Bangladesh, Haiti, and China.

"The integrity of our maritime borders is vital to national security, and I am proud of our crew's hard work and determination throughout this deployment," said Cmdr. Todd Batten, commanding officer of Vigorous. "Together with our partner agencies, including CBP AMO, HSI, and Florida state and local law enforcement, we were able to effectively enforce United States customs and immigration laws against illegal entry."

Vigorous, along with other Coast Guard assets and additional HSTF-SE partners, maintained a continual presence with air, land and sea assets in the Florida Straits in support of OVS. HSTF-SE combines a multi-layered approach to maritime border security, which is designed to protect the safety of life at sea while preventing illegal entry into the U.S. and its territories.

Vigorous is a 210-foot, Reliance-class medium-endurance cutter. The cutter's primary missions are counter-drug operations, alien interdiction, enforcement of federal fishery laws and search and rescue in support of U.S. Coast Guard operations throughout the Western Hemisphere.

For information on how to join the U.S. Coast Guard, visit [GoCoastGuard.com](https://www.goCoastGuard.com) to learn about active duty, reserve, officer, and enlisted opportunities. Information on how to apply to the U.S. Coast Guard Academy can be found [here](#).

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# U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Visits Australia, Furthers Collaboration and Maritime Security



Coast Guard Capt. Matthew Rooney, the commanding officer of the Coast Guard Cutter Midgett (WMSL 757) and Royal Australian Navy Capt. Rebecca Levitt, the commanding officer of His Majesty's Australian Ship Kuttabul, exchange patches during a media engagement in Sydney, Feb. 25, 2025. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Jennifer Nilson)  
From U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Area, March 4, 2025

SYDNEY – The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Midgett (WMSL 757) recently completed a port call in Sydney, Feb. 25, 2025, conducting several engagements with Australian partners that strengthened ties and furthered collaborative maritime security throughout Oceania. Reflecting the spirit of the Pacific Quadrilateral Defense Coordinating Group, the U.S. Coast Guard continues its vital collaboration with Australian law enforcement to identify maritime vulnerabilities and cooperate on solutions that reduce risks to safety, health, and security throughout the region.

While in Sydney, Midgett hosted a law enforcement partnership event with Australian and United States stakeholders. Participants, including U.S. Consul General in Sydney Christine Elder, U.S. Coast Guard Attaché Capt. Amanda Ramassini, representatives from U.S. Homeland Security Investigations, U.S. Secret Service, and Australian law enforcement and maritime security partners, joined the crew for breakfast and roundtable discussions in the wardroom, followed by a tour of the cutter. Law enforcement partners received a briefing on Midgett's capabilities and its current mission in the Pacific. Highlighting the close bond between the two nations and their agencies, Midgett's Lt. Jake Behne recently deployed to the Torres Strait as an observer with the Australian Border Force (ABF) Fast Response Boat unit, and now an ABF Officer in Charge is set to sail aboard Midgett as an observer.

Separately, Sydney media outlets were invited aboard with the assistance of U.S. Consulate Sydney; the subsequent reporting on partnerships reached more than a million Australians.

Beyond official engagements, the crew of Midgett embraced the opportunity to experience Australian culture and history during a visit to the Australian National Maritime Museum.

"This visit to Sydney was more than just a port call; it was a chance to reinforce the vital link between the U.S. Coast

Guard and our Australian counterparts,” said Capt. Matthew Rooney, Midgett’s commanding officer. “The support we received from HMAS Kuttabul was first rate and the warm welcome from our Royal Australian Navy shipmates made our time here truly memorable.”

The United States’ alliance with Australia remains a cornerstone of peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region. The U.S. Coast Guard looks forward to continuing partnerships with Australia’s maritime and border forces to ensure a connected, prosperous, secure, and resilient Pacific.

Midgett, commissioned in 2019 and homeported in Honolulu, is the eighth Legend-class national security cutter. These 418-foot vessels are equipped with advanced technology, making them ideally suited to support a wide range of missions, including maritime security, law enforcement, and search and rescue operations.