

Coast Guard Crew Offloads \$335.8M Worth of Cocaine in San Diego



Crewmembers of the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Munro (WMSL 755) work on the flight deck of the cutter during the contraband offload in San Diego, Nov. 19, 2024 (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Richard Uranga)

From U.S. Coast Guard District Eleven, Nov. 19, 2024

SAN DIEGO – The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Munro (WMSL 755) offloaded more than 29,000 pounds of cocaine, with an estimated value of \$335.8 million, Tuesday in San Diego.

The offload is a result of eleven separate suspected drug smuggling vessel interdictions or events off the coasts of Mexico and Central and South America in September and October.

“I would put this crew on any mission, anywhere, at any time,” said Capt. James O’Mara, commanding officer, Coast Guard Cutter Munro. “They executed everything asked of them with

incredible teamwork and persistence, and we are proud of the results. Hats off to all our international and interagency partners – we absolutely cannot do this mission without them. For our families and loved ones back home: your support keeps us going out there. It takes everyone's head in the game to make these interdictions happen, and we are grateful you have our backs on the home front as we patrol the high seas and do our part to prevent dangerous narcotics from hitting cities around the globe.”

Multiple U.S. agencies, including the Departments of Defense, Justice, and Homeland Security, collaborate 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, all play a role in counter-narcotic operations. The fight against drug cartels in the Eastern Pacific Ocean requires unity of effort in all phases, from detection and monitoring to interdictions and criminal prosecutions.

“Our partnerships and our collective abilities are vital to the security and prosperity of the hemisphere,” said Rear Adm. Joseph Buzzella, commander, Coast Guard District Eleven. “The Eastern Pacific is a challenging environment – both operationally and logistically. The transit zone is a vast area of ocean to cover, far from home. Despite the challenges, the success of the Munro's crew highlights the importance of what we do on the high seas.”

The fight against drug cartels in the Eastern Pacific Ocean requires unity of effort in all phases, from detection, monitoring and interdictions to criminal prosecutions by international partners and U.S. Attorneys' Offices in districts across the nation. The law enforcement phase of counter-smuggling operations in the Eastern Pacific Ocean is conducted under the authority of Coast Guard District Eleven, headquartered in Alameda, California. The interdictions,

including the actual boardings, are led and conducted by members of the U.S. Coast Guard.

These interdictions relate to Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) 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>.

The Munro is the sixth Legend Class National Security Cutter, and is homeported in Alameda, California. The ship/s crew can operate in the most demanding open ocean environments, including the hazardous fisheries of the North Pacific Ocean and the vast approaches of the Southern Pacific Ocean, where significant narcotics trafficking occurs.

Crewmembers of the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Munro (WMSL 755) work on the flight deck of the cutter during the contraband offload in San Diego, Nov. 19, 2024. The Munro crew members interdicted the narcotics in the Eastern Pacific during counter-narcotic patrols, seizing 29,000 pounds of cocaine worth an estimated wholesale value of \$335.8 million. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Richard Uranga)

Coast Guard Cutter Seneca Returns Home After 61-Day Patrol in the Eastern Pacific

Ocean



The Coast Guard Cutter Seneca (WMEC-906) crew underway on the Eastern Pacific Ocean, Sept. 22, 2018. The cutter Seneca is the sixth of thirteen 270' Famous Class medium endurance cutters in the United States Coast Guard fleet. (Coast Guard Photo)

U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area, Nov. 19, 2024

PORTSMOUTH, Va. – The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Seneca (WMEC 906) returned to their home port of Portsmouth, Oct. 30, following a 61-day counter-drug patrol in the Eastern Pacific Ocean.

During the deployment, Seneca's crew conducted law enforcement operations on the high seas to disrupt illegal narcotics smuggling.

Patrolling in support of Joint Interagency Task Force – South's (JIATF-S) counter-drug mission, Seneca worked to counter illicit maritime activities, strengthen partner nation

ties and facilitate the safety of life at sea. While deployed in the Coast Guard Eleventh District area of operations, Seneca's crew worked alongside an embarked aviation unit from the Coast Guard Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron and law enforcement detachment (LEDET) personnel from the Tactical Law Enforcement Team – South (TACLET-S).

While at sea, Seneca's crew provided assistance during a Costa Rican forces interdiction of a vessel carrying illegal drugs. The joint interdiction prevented approximately 3,376 pounds of marijuana, worth an estimated street-value of over \$3.2 million, from illicit distribution.

This interdiction displayed how U.S. Coast Guard units work effectively with partner nations to combat illicit transnational activities. While on patrol in the Eastern Pacific Ocean, Seneca also operated alongside Coast Guard Cutters Munro (WMSL 755), Hamilton (WMSL 753), Vigorous (WMEC 627) and U.S. Navy Independence-variant littoral combat ship USS St. Louis (LCS 19).

“Our deployment is representative of the combined efforts of U.S. and allied military units from a coalition of partners working together to deny drug trafficking organizations access to maritime smuggling routes,” said Cmdr. Lee Jones, commanding officer of Seneca. “The U.S. Coast Guard's ability to forge strong and lasting international partnerships that further the national interest is what makes our service such a unique instrument of national security. I am proud of the hard work, resiliency, and dedication to duty exhibited by the crew of Seneca.”

Detecting and interdicting illicit drug traffickers on the high seas involves significant interagency and international coordination. JIATF-S based in Key West, Florida conducts the detection and monitoring of aerial and maritime transit of illegal drugs. Support from TACLET-S, which is based in Miami, improves mission capability.

Seneca is a 270-foot, Famous-class medium endurance cutter. Commissioned in 1987, the cutter has called Portsmouth home for the past four years. The cutter's primary missions are counter-drug and migrant interdiction operations, enforcement of laws and treaties, 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](#).

Coast Guard Establishes New JR0TC Program at Veterans Memorial High School in Corpus Christi



From U.S. Coast Guard Public Affairs Detachment Corpus Christi, Texas

Nov. 15, 2024

CORPUS CHRISTI, Texas – The Coast Guard established a new Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps Program at Veterans Memorial High School in Corpus Christi, Nov. 14.

Veterans Memorial High School's Coast Guard JROTC unit is the 13th in the nation and has over 50 cadets enrolled in the inaugural semester.

"We're excited to be at Veterans Memorial High School today. They're off to an excellent start with Commander Gully and Chief O'Leary," said Cmdr. Clay Cromer, Coast Guard JROTC program manager. "We're thrilled with the cadets' leadership, enthusiasm, and the initiative they're bringing to the table early on."

Coast Guard JROTC instructors are hired and employed by the

school district and certified by the service. Instructors must be Coast Guard retired, selected reserve, or qualified veterans with at least eight years of service. Veterans Memorial High School's Coast Guard JROTC instructors are Cmdr. Matthew Gully (USCG, Ret.) and Chief Petty Officer Mike O'leary (USCG, Ret.).

The National Defense Authorization Act of 2023 mandated the Coast Guard to establish and maintain JROTC programs in each of the nine Coast Guard districts by Dec. 31, 2025. The Coast Guard is establishing four new JROTC units this fall, bringing the total to 14 JROTC units, with program-wide enrollment of over 1200 cadets. These new units are at the following host schools:

- Barnstable High School – Barnstable, MA

- Innovation High School – Orlando, FL

- Veterans Memorial High School – Corpus Christi, TX

- Kalani High School – Honolulu, HI

Coast Guard JROTC is not a recruiting program. Cadets incur no military service obligation by participation in JROTC, but they may be eligible for advanced enlistment opportunities with 2 or more years of participation in the program. The program helps equip cadets with the skills necessary to be more prepared for tomorrow's challenges, no matter what path they take.

To learn more about the Coast Guard JROTC program, visit their website: [U.S. Coast Guard Junior Reserve Officers' Training](#)

Coast Guard Cutter Stratton Returns Home Following 110-day Arctic Deployment



The Coast Guard Cutter Stratton (WMSL 752) transits Glacier Bay, Alaska, Aug. 1, 2024, while patrolling the region. Stratton's crew returned to its homeport in Alameda, Calif., on Nov. 4, after completing a 110-day patrol in the Arctic Ocean, Chukchi Sea and Bering Sea. (U.S. Coast Guard courtesy photo)

From U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Area, Nov. 15, 2024

ALAMEDA, Calif. – The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Stratton

(WMSL 752) returned to its Alameda homeport on Nov. 4, after completing a 110-day patrol in the Arctic Ocean, Chukchi Sea and Bering Sea.

Stratton departed Alameda on July 18 and patrolled the Alaskan Inside Passage to Juneau, Alaska, throughout the Gulf of Alaska, the Bering Sea and into the Arctic Ocean. The crew supported U.S. strategic interests in the high latitudes and ensured the safety and compliance of domestic fishery operators. This was Stratton's second 110-day Alaska patrol in 2024.

During the patrol, Stratton's crew tracked and observed two Russian Federation Navy surface action groups transiting through U.S. waters above the Arctic Circle. [Stratton patrolled under Operation Frontier Sentinel](#), an operation designed to meet presence with presence when strategic competitors operate in and around U.S. waters. The Coast Guard's presence strengthens the international rules-based order and promotes the conduct of operations in a manner consistent with international law and norms.

While patrolling the Arctic, Stratton conducted the first at-sea refueling evolutions for a national security cutter in the high latitudes. The at-sea refueling extended patrol times in the Arctic and enabled persistent Coast Guard presence in the remote region.

Stratton conducted 20 boardings of commercial fishing vessels and foreign trans-shipment vessels enforcing safety and fishing regulations. Alaska's fisheries are some of the nation's largest providers of seafood and are a critical component of the U.S. economy. The Coast Guard's efforts in ensuring safe fishing practices are essential to support this vital industry.

Stratton's crew also conducted search and rescue (SAR)

operations while deployed to the region. Stratton responded to the fishing vessel Galatea, which was adrift in a storm without propulsion due to a severed engine cooling line. Stratton crew deployed to the fishing vessel, repaired the casualty, and safely escorted Galatea to Dutch Harbor.

Stratton also [responded to the 738-foot cargo tanker Pan Viva](#) beset by a storm north of Dutch Harbor. After losing propulsion, the vessel was in danger of running aground in seas greater than 30' and 90-mile-per-hour winds. Stratton provided operational oversight to Pan Viva as Coast Guard MH-60 helicopter air crews evacuated non-essential personnel and commercial tugs aided the vessel.

Throughout the patrol, Stratton conducted 334 deck landings qualifications with Air Station Kodiak's MH-60 helicopter air crews operating near the Alaskan towns of Utqiagvik and Kotzebue above the Arctic Circle, to Cold Bay and Dutch Harbor in the Bering Sea. Stratton's coordination of these flight operations provided training opportunities for the crews to enhance their SAR capabilities in the remote areas of Alaska, which tripled the number of shipboard-qualified pilots in the Alaska region.

"I am extremely proud of the resilience and professionalism of Stratton's crew who've spent eight of the last ten months at sea in Alaska, conducting missions to safeguard our nation and people throughout two deployments to the region," said Capt. Brian Krautler, Stratton's commanding officer. "We met foreign presence in the Arctic, demonstrating our ability and resolve to protect our most challenging border and we found new ways to extend our presence, devising means to refuel at sea in the high latitudes. We boarded U.S. and foreign vessels to ensure compliance with legal and safety regulations, we enhanced SAR capabilities through rigorous flight training and conducted important search and rescue cases in our most demanding area of operations."

Stratton also met with the Royal Canadian Navy leadership during a port call in Victoria, Canada, to discuss strategic interests and cooperative efforts in the region. Stratton hosted three Royal Canadian Navy members during the patrol, enhancing U.S. and Canadian interoperability.

Additionally, Stratton conducted community relations engagements in the remote Alaskan communities of Savoonga, Teller and Brevig Mission. During these engagements, crew members met with tribal and city council leadership, volunteered at elementary schools, provided training in water and boating safety, participated in community-wide events including a high-latitude half-marathon, and learned about Inupiat culture, aiding in the service's understanding of the communities and how to optimize support for remote Alaskan villages.

Commissioned in 2012, Stratton is one of ten commissioned legend-class national security cutters and one of four homeported in Alameda. National security cutters are 418-feet long, 54-feet wide, and have a 4,600 long-ton displacement. They have a top speed of 28 knots, a range of 12,000 nautical miles, and can hold a crew of up to 170. Stratton routinely conducts operations throughout the Pacific, where the cutter's combination of range, speed, and ability to operate in extreme weather provides the mission flexibility necessary to conduct vital strategic missions.

Stratton's namesake is Capt. Dorothy Stratton, who led the service's all-female reserve force during World War II. Dorothy Stratton was the first female commissioned officer in the Coast Guard and commanded more than 10,000 personnel. The ship's motto is "we can't afford not to."

Coast Guard Holds Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony for New Air Station Ventura



Coast Guard Fireman Xander Belchere, assigned to Coast Guard Air Station Ventura, cuts a ribbon during the commissioning ceremony for Air Station Ventura at Naval Base Ventura County in Point Mugu, California, Nov. 13, 2024. The ribbon-cutting and commissioning ceremony marked the establishment of the newest Coast Guard air station in 25 years. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Loumania Stewart)

From U.S. Coast Guard District Eleven, Nov. 13, 2024

VENTURA, Calif. – The Coast Guard is proud to announce the opening of its newest air station at Naval Base Ventura County, Point Mugu. The ribbon cutting and commissioning

ceremony was held today, marking the establishment of the newest Coast Guard air station in 25 years.

Air Station Ventura features a \$70 million state-of-the-art, 48,000 square foot hangar and a 12,000 square foot administration facility, ensuring that Coast Guard personnel have the resources needed to carry out their vital missions. This new facility is expected to house three MH-60 Jayhawk helicopters and approximately 100 personnel, significantly enhancing the Coast Guard's capabilities in the region.

"The establishment of Air Station Ventura is a critical development for the Coast Guard's operations within the Eleventh District area of responsibility," said Rear Adm. Joseph R. Buzzella, commander, Coast Guard District Eleven. "This new station offers ready resources that provide safety and security to the maritime community. This is a monumental day for the air crews and for the community in which they serve."

Recently, the aircrew of Air Station Ventura conducted three rescues:

- Oct. 13, 2024: Air Station Ventura medevac a 63-year-old woman suffering from abdominal pain from the Cruise Ship Grand Princess
- Oct. 17, 2024: Air Station Ventura hoists a diver from vessel in 10-foot seas suffering decompression sickness near Anacapa Islands in Channel Islands.
- Oct. 31, 2024: Air Station Ventura medevac a man suffering from seizures from Cruise Ship Celebrity Radiance

“The recent rescues by the team at Air Station Ventura is a testament to the skill, dedication and readiness of our aircrews,” said Cmdr. Amanda Sardone, commanding officer, Air Station Ventura. “As plank owners, our crew will continue to leave a lasting mark on the future of this unit and service.”

The air station serves a crucial role in protecting the maritime region from Orange County to San Luis Obispo County including the vital ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach encompassing an area of responsibility more than 350 nautical miles.. Its missions include 24/7 emergency response; search and rescue; drug and migrant interdiction; law enforcement; and marine safety and environmental protection. The permanent presence of the Coast Guard in Ventura County provides enhanced security and quicker response times to emergencies, benefiting both the local community and maritime industries. District 11 now consists of five air stations in its area of responsibility to include: Humboldt Bay, San Francisco, Sacramento, San Diego and Ventura.

Airbus MH-65 Dolphin Helicopter Passes 40 Years of Coast Guard Service



From Airbus Helicopters

Today, Nov. 14, Airbus and the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) are celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Airbus MH-65 Dolphin helicopter fleet supporting the USCG's vital life-saving missions.

Key Highlights:

- The first MH-65 Dolphin was delivered on November 14, 1984 to the USCG at Airbus' Grand Prairie, Texas facility, which continues to service and support the maintenance of this fleet today.
- In honor of this milestone, a Houston Coast Guard station will fly in an MH-65 to meet the Airbus team responsible for their ongoing support at the Airbus Helicopters' facility in Grand Prairie, Texas.

- Airbus employees in the Dallas area work tirelessly to ensure the Coast Guard can execute their critical missions effectively.

Quick Facts about the Airbus MH-65 Dolphin helicopter:

- In Service: Nearly 100 helicopters supporting the U.S. Coast Guard, accumulating more than 1.8 million flight hours; It currently makes up the largest fleet in the USCG.
- Locations: Operates across 26 states and various international locations
- Missions: The MH-65 has saved more lives and interdicted more drugs than any other helicopter in history.
- Global Reach: The MH-65 has operated on every continent

Airbus is the world's leading helicopter manufacturer, offering the most comprehensive lineup of civilian and military helicopters in the world.

USCGC Reliance Returns to Florida After 60-day

Operation Vigilant Sentry Patrol



Coast Guard Cutter Reliance (WMEC 615) deck crew members handle line during towing operations with the cutter's small boat, Oct. 11, 2024, while at sea in the Windward Passage. Reliance's crew completed a 60-day patrol in the Seventh Coast Guard District area of responsibility to conduct maritime safety and security missions. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Ensign Sarah Kaleta)

From U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area, Nov. 7, 2024

PENSACOLA, Fla. – The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Reliance (WMEC 615) returned to their home port in Pensacola, Oct. 28, following a 60-day patrol in the Windward Passage.

Throughout their deployment in the Seventh Coast Guard District's area of responsibility, the crew's primary missions were to protect the safety of life at sea and deter dangerous and unlawful migrant ventures bound for the United States.

Deployed in support of the Homeland Security Task Force – Southeast (HSTF-SE) initiative Operation Vigilant Sentry (OVS), Reliance’s crew worked alongside additional Coast Guard and partner assets to dissuade maritime migration and enforce immigration laws on the high seas.

While on patrol, Reliance’s crew interdicted four overloaded and unsafe vessels, ultimately saving the lives of 441 Haitian and Dominican migrants, including many infants and children.

During two hazardous and similar cases, Reliance’s crew located the unseaworthy migrant voyages in the dark of night and evacuated nearly 200 migrants from each vessel. Crew members moved the migrants to safety while preventing their grossly overloaded vessels from capsizing. After transferring the migrants from their unsafe vessels aboard the cutter, the crew provided humanitarian aid and care until the migrants could be safely repatriated to their countries of origin.

Of note, this was an historic patrol for the Coast Guard’s oldest medium endurance cutter; after 60 years in service, this was Reliance’s first patrol with a fully mixed-gender crew. Reliance recently completed a project to provide onboard accommodations for female enlisted crew members, increasing opportunities for female Coast Guard members to serve afloat.

“I am extremely proud of and have been continually impressed by our crew during my first deployment onboard Reliance,” said Cmdr. Aaron Kowalczyk, commanding officer of Reliance. “Their tireless effort and relentless compassion for the Coast Guard’s humanitarian mission was inspiring and ultimately resulted in saving hundreds of lives while deterring illicit maritime migration. As Reliance enters her seventh decade of service, the ship and especially this crew remain ‘Semper Paratus – Always Ready’ for the next mission.”

Established in 2003, HSTF-SE is the Department of Homeland Security (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 protect life at sea while deterring and dissuading mass maritime 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](#).

Bollinger Shipyards Delivers FRC 1158 John Witherspoon to U.S. Coast Guard



Photo credit: Bollinger Shipyards
From Bollinger Shipyards

LOCKPORT, La., – (November 7, 2024) – Bollinger Shipyards (“Bollinger”) today announced the delivery of the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter (USCGC) John Witherspoon at Coast Guard Sector Key West. This is the 58th Fast Response Cutter (FRC) delivered under the U.S. Coast Guard’s current program and the 184th vessel built by Bollinger for the U.S. Coast Guard over a 40-year partnership and will be homeported in Kodiak, Alaska.

“We are honored to deliver John Witherspoon to the U.S. Coast Guard, continuing our proud tradition of providing high-quality, mission-ready vessels,” said Bollinger President & CEO Ben Bordelon. “The FRC platform has proven itself time and again as a cornerstone of the Coast Guard’s fleet, excelling in a wide range of operational conditions. We’re confident John Witherspoon will serve its crew well in their mission of

defending our nation's national security interests over a vast and challenging area of responsibility."

The John Witherspoon will be homeported in Kodiak, Alaska. This vessel is the fourth FRC to join the fleet in Alaskan waters, reinforcing maritime security and bolstering the U.S. Coast Guard's ability to respond swiftly to emerging threats and protect vital infrastructure.

The Coast Guard's Fiscal Year 2025 Budget to Congress includes procuring two more FRCs to provide increased Coast Guard presence and engagement with allied countries in the Indo-Pacific region. As negotiations on federal appropriations continue, the future of the FRC program holds significant weight for both national security and the economy. The House of Representatives has approved funding for four additional Fast Response Cutters (FRCs) in its defense appropriations bill, providing a boost to the U.S. Coast Guard's fleet expansion. However, the Senate has yet to reach a consensus on future funding levels for the FRC program, leaving the long-term prospects for the program and the over 600 jobs that it supports in Lockport, La. uncertain.

Bordelon continued, "With over 600 jobs at our Lockport facility hanging in the balance, we're not just building ships – we're supporting families and communities throughout South Louisiana. Congress has long supported the FRC program for its essential role in defending our coastline, but also for the livelihoods it sustains in our community. We are hopeful that these efforts will continue to receive robust bipartisan, bicameral support as Congress finalizes appropriations."

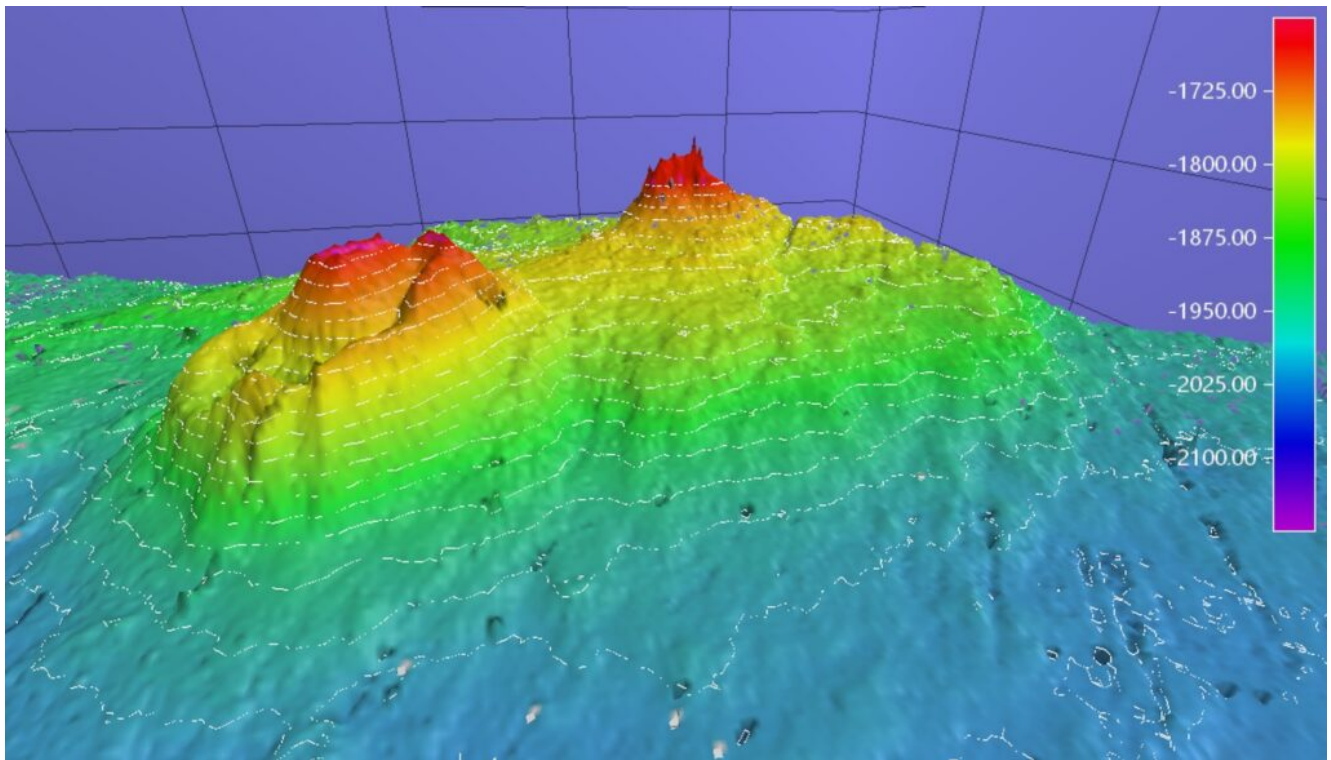
Each FRC is named for an enlisted Coast Guard hero who distinguished themselves in the line of duty. This vessel is named after Captain John Witherspoon, who served as commanding officer of cutters Mallow, Valiant, and Dependable. Notably, he was the first African American officer to command a shore unit when he assumed command of the Houston/Galveston Vessel

Traffic Service. Upon taking command of Mallow in 1982, Witherspoon became the second ever African American officer to command a Coast Guard cutter. His legacy is further honored through the Captain John G. Witherspoon Inspirational Leadership Award, which recognizes officers who exemplify inspirational leadership, mentorship, and dedication to Coast Guard values. Captain Witherspoon upheld the highest traditions of the Coast Guard as an inspirational role model and mentor for Coast Guard men and women.

ABOUT THE FAST RESPONSE CUTTER PLATFORM

The FRC is an operational “game changer,” according to senior Coast Guard officials. FRCs are consistently being deployed in support of the full range of missions within the United States Coast Guard and other branches of our armed services. This is due to its exceptional performance, expanded operational reach and capabilities, and 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 in at 154-feet, FRCs have a flank speed of 28 knots, state of the art C4ISR suite (Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance), and stern launch and recovery ramp for a 26-foot, over-the-horizon interceptor cutter boat.

USCGC Healy Crew and Science Teams Discover Volcano-Like Underwater Feature



Bathymetric data of volcano-like feature discovered by science teams aboard the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Healy (WAGB 20) on the continental slope along Northern Alaska during the Healy's Phase 1 Arctic 2024 Fall Deployment supporting Alaskan Arctic Coast Port Access Routing Study and Opportunistic Mapping Initiative (Image courtesy of NOAA)

From U.S. Coast Guard 17th District, Nov. 7, 2024

NOME, Alaska – U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Healy (WAGB 20) and embarked science teams completed the first two phases of the icebreaker's 2024 Arctic Fall deployment Sunday and continue operations offshore of western and northern Alaska.

Healy's crew and the science teams conducted multiple scientific and seafloor mapping missions, which resulted in the discovery of a subsea volcano-like feature during the first phase.

The first two phases featured a collaboration between the U.S. Coast Guard, the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the University of New Hampshire.

The interagency science mission to the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas north of Alaska combined oceanographic buoy deployments with a coordinated mapping effort to survey uncharted waters and acquire depth data along a portion of the Alaskan Arctic Coast Port Access Route Study (AACPARS) corridor, a Coast Guard-proposed preferred vessel route from Utqiagvik, Alaska, to the demarcation point of the border between U.S. and Canada.

During the mission's first phase, the science party discovered a volcano-like feature rising 500 meters from the seabed, approximately 1,600 meters below the surface at its shallowest depth. Upon further review of water column data collected at the site, the science team detected a potential gas plume rising from just above the feature to near the water's surface. The feature poses no risk to navigation as it is well below navigable draft of the largest modern vessels.

"Although data analysis is ongoing, these findings are exciting and offer insight into what may exist beneath the ocean's surface, much of which is unknown in this region," said Capt. Meghan McGovern, commanding officer of NOAA Ship Fairweather and currently embarked with the Healy mapping team. "The coordination and partnerships during this mission fill critical gaps in the region for all waterway users and provide a foundation for safe navigation in the Arctic."

McGovern and a NOAA team from the Fairweather, an Alaska-based hydrographic survey vessel, joined the science party aboard Healy to support mapping coastal waters using Healy's multibeam echo sounders for obtaining bathymetric data to provide highly accurate depths and detailed images of the sea floor and objects along the AACPARS corridor.

Healy hosted postdoctoral researchers and junior faculty members from a variety of institutions during the second phase

of the Arctic deployment supporting the U.S. NSF-funded Polar Early Career Scientist Training project, with contributions from NOAA and the Coast Guard providing training and research opportunities in the operational areas of the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas and within the marginal ice zone.

The time underway provided ten early career polar scientists and their mentors with at-sea training and hands-on experience for the researchers to gain the knowledge and skills that will prepare them to plan, implement, and lead future interdisciplinary scientific expeditions on U.S. Arctic vessels.

These early career scientists conducted multidisciplinary research, including mapping to fill critical bathymetric gaps and scientific sampling across various disciplines. They also developed skills in shipboard leadership, coordination, and execution.

“It’s an honor supporting such diverse research missions in the northern high latitudes while working towards enhancing navigation safety in a region where soundings are sparse,” said Healy’s Commanding Officer Capt. Michele Schallip. “As scientific interest in the Arctic Ocean Basin grows, Healy is on the front-line providing access to the scientific community facilitating Arctic research opportunities while inspiring future chief scientists. Our crew remains committed to ensuring we are ready to meet the challenges unique to operating in the austere environment to see completion of these vital missions.”

Homeported in Seattle, Healy is the Coast Guard’s only icebreaker specifically designed to support research. It provides high-latitude U.S. presence and scientific access to areas too challenging for most research vessels to reach.

Coast Guard, Canadian Forces, Partners Wrap Up Operation North Pacific Guard 2024



A foreign fishing vessel discarding a finless shark carcass while conducting shark finning operations in the North Pacific, May 12, 2024. Regional Fisheries Management Organizations regulate the process of shark finning through Conservation and Management Measures. These measures require fully utilizing retained catches of sharks and limits on amounts of fins onboard in relation to those sharks. (U.S. Coast Guard courtesy photo)

From U.S. Coast Guard District 17 Oct. 29, 2024

JUNEAU, Alaska – The U.S. Coast Guard, Canadian forces, and international partners wrap-up Northern Pacific counter Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing patrol, Operation North Pacific Guard 2024.

Operation North Pacific Guard is an annual multi-mission effort between international partners that provides surface and air patrols and shares intelligence that guides patrol assets to detect and intercept illicit fishing activity.

The joint mission included U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Midgett, U.S. Coast Guard Air Station Kodiak, U.S. Coast Guard District Seventeen, the United States National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the Canadian Coast Guard Ship (CCGS) Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Japan Coast Guard, Fisheries Agency of Japan, and Korea Coast Guard.

As a result of the high seas patrols, air surveillance, and electronic monitoring, the joint crews identified potential instances of illegal harvesting of shark fins and dark vessels, a term for vessels that intentionally turn off their monitoring systems.

U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Midgett patrolled the North Pacific for 65 days and conducted 21 high-seas boardings and inspections which detected four potential violations of conservation and management measures under the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) and North Pacific Fisheries Commission (NPFC).

U.S. Coast Guard Air Station Kodiak HC-130J Super Hercules airplane crewmembers conducted five 12-day deployments near Yokota Air Base and Misawa, Japan and observed 411 vessels. The crews observed potential shark finning violations and improper fishing vessel markings on multiple vessels.

“IUU fishing is a complex and global problem that calls for an international unified response,” said Capt. Ryan Waters, chief of enforcement for the Coast Guard’s Seventeenth District. “North Pacific Guard is a prime example of a strong, sustained multi-lateral partnership to maximize the impact of collective counter-IUU fishing enforcement efforts and promote

the rule of law at sea.”

IUU fishing is detrimental to long-term, stable national security, international relations, and global economics. Up to 27 million tons of fish are caught illegally each year worldwide. The U.S Coast Guard leads U.S. Government efforts in multinational campaigns like North Pacific Guard that counter IUU fishing at-sea, uphold global rules-based order, and promote economic prosperity.

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