

U.S. Coast Guard Completes Operation Island Chief in Pacific Region



U.S. Coast Guard personnel from District Fourteen and Air Station Barbers Point pose for a photo with a member of the Royal New Zealand Air Force and Forum Fisheries Agency at the Regional Fisheries Surveillance Centre (RFSC) in Honiara, Solomon Islands, Aug. 13, 2024. (U.S. Coast Guard courtesy photo)

From U.S. Coast Guard District 14 External Affairs, Aug. 19, 2024

HONOLULU – The U.S. Coast Guard completed Island Chief, a 13-day operation to safeguard the invaluable marine resources of Pacific Island nations and the Western Central Pacific Ocean.

From Aug. 5-16, an HC-130 Hercules airplane crew from Coast Guard Air Station Barbers Point patrolled the South Pacific High Seas in and around the exclusive economic zones of Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Nauru, Republic of Marshall Islands, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu to detect, investigate and report any illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing activity.

The Hercules crew worked with the Regional Fisheries Surveillance Centre, a part of the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) in Honiara, Solomon Islands, to reinforce the conservation work of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission.

Coast Guard participation in Operation Island Chief is part of Operation Blue Pacific, an overarching multi-mission Coast Guard endeavor promoting security, safety, sovereignty and economic prosperity in the Pacific while strengthening relationships between partner nations.

The Coast Guard conducted Operation Island Chief alongside the Pacific Quadrilateral Defense Coordinating Group (Pacific QUAD), in support of the Pacific Islands FFA and its members.

FFA Director General Dr. Manu Tupou-Roosen highlighted the significance of the FFA-led Operation Island Chief 2024, coordinating surveillance efforts for participating Members.

“Operation Island Chief reinforces FFA’s commitment to sustainable fisheries management and maritime security in the Pacific,” said Dr. Tupou-Roosen. “This operation exemplifies the spirit of regional collaboration and determination among Pacific Island nations. The compliance checks of vessels and operators through a robust regional surveillance operation ensures effective management regime and preserving our marine resources, as well as securing the livelihoods and food security of our people.”

“Given the vastness of the Pacific region, close collaboration

between U.S. Coast Guard personnel, patrol assets and regional partners is integral to sustained success in combatting IUU fishing across the region,” said Marc Stegman, IUU fishing strategic advisor, Coast Guard District Fourteen.

Joint efforts for Operation Nasse covered over 7 million square miles, with the Coast Guard contributing:

Over 37 hours of flight time

Over 10,500 miles flown

Over 232,100 square miles searched

Three missions flown from Vanuatu and four missions flown from Solomon Islands

70 vessels sighted and analyzed

Located in Honolulu, U.S. Coast Guard District Fourteen covers more than 14 million square miles of land and sea, conducting operations over the Hawaiian Islands, American Samoa, Saipan, Guam, Singapore and Japan.

Japan Buys Two SeaGuardians From GA-ASI



SAN DIEGO, August 15, 2024 (Newswire.com) – The [Japan Coast Guard](#) (JCG) has signed a contract for the purchase of two SeaGuardian® Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) from General Atomics Aeronautical Systems, Inc. (GA-ASI), scheduled for delivery in 2025. This follows JCG’s ongoing Company-Owned, Contractor-Operated agreement with GA-ASI for operating SeaGuardian, which began in April 2022.

“Since JCG started operating SeaGuardians, they have been used for various JCG missions, including supporting search and rescue and disaster response, specifically during the 7.6 magnitude earthquake early this year near the Noto Peninsula of Ishikawa Prefecture and maritime surveillance during the 2023 G-7 Summit in Hiroshima, and the system has performed efficiently and effectively,” said GA-ASI CEO Linden Blue.

SeaGuardian is a medium-altitude, long-endurance RPA system that can fly for 24 hours or more, depending on the configuration.

GA-ASI has strengthened its Maritime Wide Area Surveillance (MWAS) for Japan with Optix+, which gathers information from the SeaGuardian sensors, as well as other data sources, displaying the full picture of surveillance information for

its operator. This functionality makes it easy to task and direct its Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) information in real time. GA-ASI's Optix+ software suite rapidly correlates and exploits collected data into an easily shared common operational picture. Having multi-source correlated data enables automatic detection of anomalous behaviors over waters.

Senate Committee Report Calls for Coast Guard Action on Sexual Harassment Claims



Admiral Linda Fagan and Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard Heath Jones converse Oct. 19, 2023 with Senator Tammy Duckworth in observance of National Disability

Employment Awareness Month. *U.S. Coast Guard | Petty Officer 2nd Class Erik Villa Rodriguez*

In a new report entitled “A Pervasive Problem,” the majority staff of the Homeland Security Committee’s Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations concluded the U.S. Coast Guard must do more to eliminate sexual harassment in its ranks and at the service’s academy and should use evidence uncovered by the panel to prosecute perpetrators.

“The Subcommittee has heard from more than 80 whistleblowers, who together have made clear the need for immediate change both at the Academy and in the Coast Guard,” the report’s conclusion says. “Their stories detail systemic sexual assault and harassment, including a culture of silencing, retaliation, and failed accountability. Although Operation Fouled Anchor initially brought these problems to light, they span both the Academy and the Fleet – the Coast Guard as a whole must work to build a culture in which everyone is safe, respected, and valued.”

The panel has been looking into the issue for more than a year, and recently [held a hearing](#) featuring Coast Guard Commandant Admiral Linda L. Fagan as the main witness, focusing on Operation Fouled Anchor, the Coast Guard’s investigation into sexual harassment allegations. Members of the panel charged the service had buried the results of its own investigation until CNN brought them to light. Fagan pledged to be transparent in dealing with the issue, which is also being investigated by the service’s inspector general.

However, in a “note from the chair” that begins the new report, panel chairman Sen. Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut writes, “I am deeply disappointed by the Coast Guard’s responses to this Subcommittee’s requests for critically necessary information. Despite repeatedly and publicly claiming a commitment to transparency, the organization has often resisted constructive responses. Such repeated opposition to disclosure has made us wonder whether the Coast

Guard is, once again, attempting to escape Congressional scrutiny.”

Victim Reports

The report includes statements from numerous reports of sexual assault going back decades, as well as what survivors describe as attempts to silence them.

“These stories, spanning from the 1970s through the 2020s, depict systemic failures at the Coast Guard Academy and in the Coast Guard that continue to this day,” the report says.

In one account, “after learning that she had experienced months of sexual misconduct, a superior allegedly told an enlisted whistleblower: ‘Okay, I want you to think about these men and their careers. They could lose their jobs over this, and you could ruin their lives. And then CGIS [Coast Guard Investigative Services] is going to show up and make you out to be a liar. No one will believe you. Do you want that? I want you to think about all of this before you decide to tell anyone else.’”

In some cases, “fear of punishment for collateral misconduct deterred victims of abuse from reporting. One whistleblower shared that, as a cadet in the 2010s, the threat of discipline for unrelated misconduct was used to keep her from reporting repeated sexual assaults by the same perpetrator for a year. She said: ‘He blackmailed me, using his position over me and the fact that I drank underage to get me to have sex with him. He knew that I would get into more trouble for underage drinking than he would for blackmailing me for sex. He was right. ...’”

Blumenthal’s opening note says the subcommittee will continue its work, and “our continuing investigation is likely to provide evidence that will assist and motivate the Coast Guard to impose discipline. It is imperative that the Coast Guard uses all means available to hold accountable both individual

perpetrators and the leadership that covered up their wrongdoing ... the culture will not change until the Coast Guard makes clear that sexual assault and harassment will not be tolerated.”

Coast Guard Response

The Coast Guard provided a statement to *Seapower* in response to the report.

“Sexual assault, sexual harassment, and all forms of abuse have no place in the Coast Guard. We are committed to fostering [lasting institutional and cultural change](#) that ensures a safe and respectful environment free of sexual assault, sexual harassment, and other harmful behaviors. Should such incidents occur, the Coast Guard is committed to supporting victims, upholding the law, and reinforcing the service’s core values,” the statement says.

“We are actively implementing the commandant’s 33 directed actions announced in November 2023 to strengthen our service culture, improve support and care of victims, and hold perpetrators accountable. Our progress completing 18 of these directed actions so far represents the early stages of enduring change that will ensure every person in the Coast Guard experiences a safe work environment where they are respected and valued. More information regarding the Coast Guard’s actions to address sexual assault, and ensure accountability, care, and support, is [available here](#).”

Coast Guard Offloads More

Than \$18M in Illegal Narcotics Interdicted in Caribbean



Bales of cocaine stacked on a pier at Base Miami Beach on August 14, 2024. This offload was the result of drug interdiction efforts by Coast Guard and Navy crews in the international waters of Caribbean. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Nicholas Strasburg)

From U.S. Coast Guard 7th District, Aug. 15, 2024

MIAMI – The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Robert Yered offloaded more than 1,380 pounds of cocaine with an assessed street value of approximately \$18.1 million in Miami Beach, Wednesday.

A U.S. Coast Guard law enforcement detachment deployed aboard

a U.S. Navy ship interdicted the illegal drugs in the international waters of the Caribbean Sea while working alongside interagency and international partners.

During the interdiction, the go-fast vessel began taking on water and capsized. A combined Navy and Coast Guard boat crew rescued the three suspected smugglers from the water before recovering bales of jettisoned contraband from the sea.

“I am incredibly proud of the skill and tenacity displayed by our entire team during this interdiction,” said Cmdr. T.J. Orth, commanding officer of USS St. Louis. “This operation was a testament to the capability of our Navy-Coast Guard and interagency teams. The sailors of St. Louis and HSM-50, and Coast Guardsmen of LEDET 105 utilized every resource and capability at their disposal to track and intercept the vessel and then respond to safeguard the lives of the three suspected smugglers.”

The following assets and crews were involved in the interdictions:

- USS St. Louis (LCS 19)

- U.S. Coast Guard Tactical Law Enforcement Team Pacific (PAC-TACLET) Law Enforcement Detachment (LEDET) 105

- U.S. Navy Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron 50 (HSM-50) Detachment 4

- Joint Interagency Task Force South (JIATF-South)

The three suspected smugglers will face prosecution in federal courts by the U.S. Department of Justice.

Detecting and interdicting illicit drug traffickers on the high seas involves significant interagency and international coordination. The Joint Interagency Task Force South in Key West, Florida conducts the detection and monitoring of aerial and maritime transit of illegal drugs. Once interdiction becomes imminent, the law enforcement phase of the operation begins, and control of the operation shifts to the U.S. Coast Guard throughout the interdiction and apprehension. Interdictions in the Caribbean Sea are performed by members of the U.S. Coast Guard under the authority and control of the Coast Guard's Seventh District, headquartered in Miami.

This interdiction is part of an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDEF) Strike Force Initiative, which provides for the establishment of permanent multi-agency task force teams that work side-by-side in the same location. OCDEF 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 OCDEF program can be found at <https://www.justice.gov/OCDEF>.

U.S. Coast Guard Announces Juneau Homeporting for Future Icebreaker

SEAPOWERS

The Official Publication of the Navy League of the United States

From U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters, Aug. 14, 2024

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Coast Guard announced Wednesday it will homeport a commercially procured icebreaker in Juneau.

The Coast Guard is acquiring the Aiviq, a U.S. registered ship originally built to serve as an Arctic oil-exploration support vessel, which has an icebreaking capability sufficient to serve as a Coast Guard medium polar icebreaker, following modification.

“The United States is an Arctic nation, and the Coast Guard is vital to providing presence in our sovereign waters and the polar regions,” said Adm. Kevin Lunday, Coast Guard vice commandant. “As we continue to build the Polar Security Cutters, acquiring a commercially available polar icebreaker will enable the Coast Guard to increase our national presence in the Arctic, and homeporting this cutter in Alaska demonstrates the Service’s steadfast commitment to the region.”

The Coast Guard was appropriated \$125 million in fiscal year 2024 to purchase a commercially available icebreaker. Currently, the Aiviq is the only U.S. built commercial vessel meeting necessary icebreaking standards. The Service

anticipates the vessel will reach initial operational capability in two years.

The Coast Guard has been the sole provider of America's polar icebreaking capability since 1965 and is seeking to increase its icebreaking fleet with new Polar Security Cutters. The Coast Guard currently operates two polar icebreakers, the Coast Guard Cutter Healy, a medium polar icebreaker, and the Coast Guard Cutter Polar Star, the only U.S. heavy polar icebreaker.

Q&A: Vice Admiral Andrew J. Tiongson, Commander, Pacific Area and Commander, Defense Force West, U.S. Coast Guard



U.S. Coast Guard Vice Adm. Andrew Tiongson, commander of Pacific Area, shakes hands with Gen. Angus J. Campbell, Chief of the Defence Force, Australian Defence Force, in Canberra, Australia, Feb. 6, 2023. Tiongson discussed partnerships with ADF to combine efforts to ensure the region is resilient and prosperous. *U.S. Coast Guard | Senior Chief Petty Officer Charly Tautfest*

Vice Admiral Andrew J. Tiongson assumed command of Coast Guard Pacific Area in Alameda, California on July 8, 2022. He serves as the operational commander responsible for all Coast Guard missions westward from the Rocky Mountains across the Indo-Pacific, Arctic, and Antarctic regions, to the coast of eastern Africa. He concurrently serves as commander, Defense Force West and provides Coast Guard operational support to the Department of Defense and Combatant Commanders.

A 1989 graduate of the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, Tiongson has served on board five Coast Guard cutters and a U.S. Navy cruiser, serving as commanding officer of three of the

cutters.

Tiongson discussed the roles and missions of the Pacific Area with Senior Editor Richard R. Burgess. Excerpts follow.

How would you describe the roles of the Coast Guard in the expanse of the Pacific area?

TIONGSON: The Coast Guard, in many ways, fills a little bit of a vacuum within the entire Indo-Pacific region the smaller nations in Oceania, and the Western Pacific for nations like the Philippines, Japan, South Korea, et cetera, and Taiwan, for that matter. That niche that we fill is maritime governance, basically the array of Coast Guard statutory missions: search and rescue, marine environmental response, maritime security law enforcement, fisheries, facilitating commerce, and the global marine transportation system. All of those things are missions that we do day in and day out and, frankly, what I see mostly is nations within the Indo-Pacific that see how we can do that for our country, and they want to copy that [and] learn from it. They want to work with us and emulate how we provide maritime governance to the United States. That's what we get from engaging with a lot of our partners throughout the Indo-Pacific region.

How does the Coast Guard Pacific Area support U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM)?

TIONGSON: [Through] that niche that we fill. For example, a lot of what's happening out in the Western Pacific are the coast guards. We see tons of articles about the Philippines coast guard and the PRC [Peoples Republic of China] coast guard interacting with each other. We, as a coast guard, fit right in there and we have very similar missions. So, it makes it easier for us to talk back and forth and we do that with our larger national security cutters. In fact, one of them is departing Hawaii today [May 21] heading into the Western Pacific, and it will have our first trilateral exercise with

the [Republic of] Korea coast guard, Japan coast guard, United States Coast Guard working together to have a regional approach to maritime governance issues in that region.

In other places — Oceania or Blue Pacific Region — our smaller cutters are even more prevalent and better. These small nations' coast guards or navies are akin to these smaller vessels. It's not like we're overwhelming them with a large vessel that comes at your port. In fact, large vessels cannot even fit in some of these ports, but our smaller cutters can. We're able to do subject matter expert exchanges on things like maritime law enforcement, search and rescue, those types of things. In a competition phase, maritime governance is extremely important. To help nations and to work with nations to exhibit maritime governance and proper maritime behaviors is key. I think that INDOPACOM is extremely grateful and wired into all of the things that we do.

Our national security cutters that go into the Western Pacific, the vast majority of the time will be under the tactical control of 7th Fleet and they work with us directly to ensure that we're getting after our nation's strategic goals. And with all the activities we do in the Oceania of Blue Pacific region, we work hand-to-hand with INDOPACOM.

What are the expectations of the trilateral agreement signed with the coast guards of Japan and the Republic of Korea?

TIONGSON: The expectations are very simple: In a nutshell, we will work together to improve the security, the safety and the prosperity of our shared regions. We have sent [USCGC] Waesche to execute that first implementation with the Korea coast guard, Japan coast guard, and U.S. Coast Guard, but it's not our first trilateral that we've done. We've had great success working with Japan coast guard and Philippines coast guard, all working together, again, for the safety, security, and prosperity of the region as well as our nation, the United States.

As one example, there was an oil spill off of one of the Philippine Islands that rely upon the ocean for subsistence and their economy. The people that helped out the Philippine coast guard and the response to that [included] a five-person U.S. Coast Guard team and a Korea coast guard team, and Japan coast guard sent a couple of folks as well, so it's amazing what you can do with small groups of people in this region. The U.S. Coast Guard commander O-5 running a unified command cell was able to address the issue and help employ all of the resources in the right way to get after that threat to the livelihood of this Philippine island. That woman O-5 ended up being the key adviser to the commandant of the Philippine coast guard and the president of the Philippines.

Not only is it about big ships and aircraft, but it's also about small groups of people that go and provide such expertise, whether it's an exchange of ideas or assistance.



Coast Guard Vice Adm. Andrew Tiongson, commander of Pacific

Area, participates in an area familiarization boat ride in San Diego Harbor with Coast Guard Maritime Security Response Team-West members in San Diego, Feb. 16, 2023. Tiongson conducted an all hands and a unit visit to discuss the importance of MSRT-W missions and operations. *U.S. Coast Guard | Lt. Cmdr. Paul Jansen*

What is the operational impact of the new Sentinel-class fast response cutters (FRCs) based in Guam?

TIONGSON: The FRCs, first off, are game changers for the Coast Guard in general. Back in the day, we had patrol boats that were limited in terms of the sea states they could handle, the food that they could carry, the number of crew members and certainly their duration at sea. The FRCs have changed that. We are looking at FRCs giving new light on how we can employ those. So, for us, they're very much a game changer, particularly in the vastness of the Pacific Ocean. We have three that are stationed in Guam right now. We have sent them as far as Australia and the Philippines and, along the way, they provide IUU [illegal, unreported, and unregulated] fisheries enforcement. They will also pull into different partner nations and provide subject matter expert exchanges on things like search and rescue, maritime law enforcement, fisheries, humanitarian assistance and disaster response. In addition to that, what really makes them a big game changer for us is the 14 now bilateral agreements we have with nations in the Blue Pacific. Those are shiprider agreements that enable us to take one of their authorities that are underway with us and help that nation by enforcing their laws and regulations against anybody who is trying to take their sovereign resources in their exclusive economic zones [EEZs].

Our partnerships are becoming so strong that, now, in two countries, we have what is called an expanded and enhanced shiprider agreement in which we do not even need a physical human being on board the platform; all we need to do is call into the nation. An example could be a PRC fishing vessel that is in your EEZ fishing. Would you like us to enforce your laws

and regulations, the rules and regulations? A lot of times it comes back, yes, and we exercise that agreement.

And, really, what they are doing is sending a signal that the United States presence is here. We want to become a trusted partner with you and in order to be that trusted partner, we have to be there.

In addition to the three FRCs we have in Guam, the Coast Guard was just appropriated two more, and those two more will go hopefully to Guam. We want to build up Guam with three new FRCs. And then we want to put one in Honolulu, Hawaii.

What has the USCGC Harriet Lane accomplished since it was based in Hawaii?

TIONGSON: Harriet Lane is a complete game changer for us. Harriet Lane recently completed her inaugural patrol, visiting nations like Samoa, Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea. They have done exactly what I mentioned the FRCs are doing but on a larger scale.

The Pacific Area is scheduled to receive the first of the offshore patrol cutters. What missions will they be performing?

TIONGSON: We are extremely excited to have new offshore patrol cutters starting out in our AOR [area of responsibility]. This is an incredible program for the Coast Guard and the largest shipbuilding program that we have had since World War II. I had the great opportunity to watch the first one, Argus, being launched late last year. They will provide us with more offshore capacity. Think of all of those types of missions that I mentioned these platforms are going to be doing those types of missions for us globally. They are replacing our medium-endurance cutters, but I believe what we will see is that they will come with a great deal of capability and we will find new ways to employ them that we could not do with our 210-foot and even our 270-foot cutters.

How have the new HC-130Js aircraft at Barbers Point, Hawaii, added capability to your aviation operations?

TIONGSON: The cockpit avionics upgrades coupled with the efficiencies of the engines and a propeller-type design allow us to fly these HC-130J aircraft higher, get on scene faster and stay on scene longer. When you think in terms of maritime domain awareness and search and rescue, these things are definitely a game changer for our service compared with the HC130H model and the other fixed-wing assets we have had. Yes, we're excited to have those in Barbers Point as well as Kodiak, Alaska, and to be transitioning to them in Sacramento, California.

What concerns do you have about sustaining your icebreakers until the polar security cutter comes online?

TIONGSON: In a nutshell, there is more and more of a need for U.S. Coast Guard presence in the high latitudes than ever before. I see that in terms of great-power competition up in the Arctic region. I see that in Antarctica, with Chinese PRC research icebreaker vessels that are down there a great deal, and with Chinese expansion on that continent. The U.S. presence is needed. How that presence gets into those areas is via icebreaking. We need them [polar security cutters] fast and we needed them yesterday.

It is a challenge to sustain the two that we have right now. We have one heavy icebreaker, 1970s-vintage Polar Star, which provides icebreaking so that we can resupply our McMurdo station there, run by our National Science Foundation, and several other agencies there at are on that station for the scientific missions. After doing that, she goes right into the drydock and we try to fix everything. This is a vessel that works in the harshest of maritime environments. Am I worried about sustainment of it? Absolutely yes. The Coast Guard cutter Healy, that operates primarily for us in the Arctic, also is aging. She has done a trans-Arctic voyage and is set

up to do yet another one. She runs the same type of schedule as the Polar Star: operations for several months and then a major maintenance period to keep her running.

Recently we were appropriated a commercially available icebreaker. It will help us a great deal in our missions that are Arctic-related. A light icebreaker, it could not handle the thickness of ice in the Antarctic, but definitely will help us out with what the Healy's mission is.

Is the commercial icebreaker going to be crewed by Coast Guardsmen or by a contract crew?

TIONGSON: That's a great question and we are working through differing courses of action for that. The first thing is we've got to figure out what the crew is going to be and look like. The second thing that has to happen is we have to paint the icebreaker in U.S. Coast Guard markings on the vessel so that people are not confused when they see our American flag flying proudly from it. The third is, over time, we have to militarize the vessel, about it meeting military specifications: the flight deck for landing helicopters, things like that, and certain military specifications for safety and security reasons. It is really a phased approach that happens over time. Although it was just recently appropriated to us, we still have to procure the vessel. We have set up its home port in Juneau, Alaska, in terms of the pier space and then certainly maintenance activities.

For your missions closer to home, are your forces sufficient or is the number of tasks overwhelming them?

TIONGSON: We are not set up that we can handle all of these things all at once. Right now, the biggest example would be Operation Vigilant Century [OVS], [with Atlantic Area cutters] working on irregular migration coming from Haiti and Cuba for which a lot of Coast Guard resources are out on the seas, ensuring their safety and our security as we move forward. As

we surge into places like that off of Haiti in the Florida Straits area, that means that those assets can't go somewhere else, so that hinders us in looking at different places. Typically, the Atlantic area would provide some of those cutters over to the Eastern Pacific to conduct the counter-drug mission. But, right now, they are not, because they are doing this OVS mission set. And so, we have to come up with unique and innovative ways to try to fill those vacancies. So, yes, we got pressurized to do those things here in defense of the homeland.

I will also offer that the Coast Guard, like the other armed services, has personnel issues in terms of our workforce and recruiting. Although recently we have been having great success and we are doing pretty well, we are still down about 2,500 people and, in our organization, 2,500 is a lot. We have been working very hard to figure out what can we not do in terms of priority of the missions and platforms that will loosen up the pressures on our people so that our people and platforms can focus on the highest risks to our nation. That means that we have laid up some 87-foot coastal patrol boats and did an advanced decommissioning of one of our 50-plus-year-old 210-foot cutters. We have released some of the pressure on the personnel system because now we don't have to fill those billets and positions.



Tiongson speaks at a press conference before the crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Waesche offloads 18,219 pounds of cocaine, worth more than \$239 million, on Dec. 6, 2023. *U.S. Coast Guard*

Is there anything you would like to add?

TIONGSON: What I would emphasize is I was very specific in the words “a trusted partner.” That’s what we are trying to be throughout the Indo-Pacific region and everywhere from Central America and South America, Arctic nations, Antarctic, and then certainly, Western Pacific, Central Pacific and the Blue Pacific.

One of our key things is that we always want to see the threats and challenges through the eyes of our partners, always meeting them where they are and with what they need. That’s an important phrase there because sometimes, with the U.S. in all of our might, we overwhelm some of these smaller nations. So, always meeting them where they are at with what they need is a very important thing to how engage with different countries. We are getting good support from our

administration and Congress with what we talked about the Indo-Pacific and the Coast Guard. An example already was the Harriet Lane. We talked about the two additional FRCs that were appropriated to us in the FY24 budget. Previous to that, we've increased the number of liaison [personnel] and attaches we have in the region. We've stood up two other Centers of Expertise: The Marine Environmental Response Regional Activity Center and the IUU Fisheries Center of Expertise. These are all people. But again, it's not about scale and aircraft. People engage a lot, provide subject matter expert exchanges, provide training and then they make a big difference throughout the region in terms of us being a trusted partner. On our unfunded priorities list, we have a second kind of Harriet Lane or Indo-Pacific support cutter. And then in our FY25 budget we have two additional FRCs for the Indo-Pacific area. So, a lot of things are happening and it's very exciting to be part of this.

Coast Guard Cutter Waesche Returns Home Following 120-day Indo-Pacific Patrol



From U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Area, Aug. 12, 2024

ALAMEDA, Calif. – The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Waesche (WSML 751) and [crew returned to their Base Alameda home port](#) Sunday, following a 120-day patrol throughout the Indo-Pacific.

Waesche participated in various engagements, exercises, and events throughout their deployment.

The cutter's leadership and crew met with officials and military personnel during port calls in Japan, [Republic of Korea](#), Singapore, and [Vietnam](#).

Following Waesche's visit to Maizuru, Japan, Waesche joined crews from the Japan Coast Guard vessel Wakasa (PL 93) and the Republic of Korea Coast Guard patrol vessel Taepyongyang (KCG 3016) for a [joint search-and-rescue exercise at sea](#).

Waesche's crew also conducted a [bilateral U.S.-Philippine search-and-rescue exercise](#) with the Philippine Coast Guard in

the South China Sea.

“We are thankful to have traveled safely home to our loved ones and to have completed a successful and meaningful patrol,” said Capt. Tyson Scofield, Waesche’s command officer. “Waesche’s patrol strengthened U.S. relationships with our partner nations to foster a free and open Indo-Pacific. The opportunity to work alongside our allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific through impactful engagements was an honor and a rewarding experience that the crew will remember for the rest of their lives.”

Tyson assumed command of the Waesche during a [change of command ceremony](#) held in Honolulu as the cutter transited to the Indo-Pacific.

Waesche deployed with a San Francisco-based MH-65E Dolphin helicopter and an aircrew from Air Station Barbers Point, Hawaii.

Waesche was assigned to Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 15, the Navy’s largest DESRON and the U.S. 7th Fleet’s principal surface force. DESRON 15 regularly assumes tactical control of surface units operating in the area.

Commissioned in 2010, Waesche is one of four Legend-class national security cutters homeported in Alameda. National security cutters are 418-feet long, 54-feet wide, has a top speed of over 28 knots, a range of 12,000 nautical miles, endurance of up to 90 days, and can hold a crew of up to 170. The advanced technologies of the national security cutter class ships are designed to support the operations and missions in the Indo-Pacific region.

Coast Guard Encounters Russian Naval Vessel Near Alaska



Coast Guard Cutter Alex Haley (WMEC 39) detected and followed a Russian Federation Vishnya-class naval vessel Aug. 5 south of the Aleutian Islands, Alaska. (U.S. Coast Guard courtesy photo)

From U.S. Coast Guard 17th District, Aug. 9, 2024

JUNEAU, Alaska – The U.S. Coast Guard located a Russian Federation Vishnya-class naval vessel Monday south of the Aleutian Islands, Alaska.

While patrolling the Aleutian Islands, the crew of U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Alex Haley (WMEC 39) detected the vessel 30

nautical miles southeast of Amukta Pass, Alaska.

The Russian vessel was transiting in international waters but inside the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone, which extends 200 nautical miles from the U.S. shoreline. The Alex Haley did not communicate with the Russian vessel. The Alex Haley confirmed it to be a Russian Federation Vishnya-class naval vessel and followed the vessel as it transited east. An HC-130 air crew from Coast Guard Air Station Kodiak also observed the vessel.

“As a proud Alaska-homeported cutter, we patrol to uphold maritime governance and a rules-based international order,” said Cmdr. Steven Baldovsky, commanding officer of the Alex Haley. “We met presence with presence to ensure there were no disruptions to U.S. interests in the maritime environment around Alaska.”

Coast Guard Cutter Alex Haley patrolled under Operation Frontier Sentinel, a Coast Guard operation designed to meet presence with presence when strategic competitors operate in and around U.S. waters. The U.S Coast Guard’s presence strengthens the international rules-based order and promotes the conduct of operations in a manner that follows international law and norms.

This type of monitoring of vessel activity is not outside of the normal. A previous instance in 2024 can be found by [clicking here](#).

The Alex Haley is a 283-foot medium-endurance cutter homeported in Kodiak, Alaska.

USCGC Venturous Returns Home After Supporting Maritime Border Operations



Coast Guard Cutter Venturous conducts small boat operations in Canal De Tortue, Haiti July 19, 2024. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Alvin Cruz)

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. – The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Venturous (WMEC 625) returned to their homeport of St. Petersburg, Fla., Thursday after a 60-day Caribbean patrol.

During the patrol, Venturous' crew supported Operation Vigilant Sentry, a joint operation combining air and surface assets and personnel to address illegal maritime migration in the Caribbean corridor of the United States. The primary objective is to protect the safety of life at sea, and to

deter maritime mass migration.

The Venturous and its crew of more than 70 Coast Guard men and women spent the first half of the deployment in the South Florida Straits patrolling off the Florida Keys and acting as the last line of defense against illegal maritime migration. As the largest cutter in the area, Venturous held seven rescued migrants before they were repatriated to their home country, while also providing much-needed first aid to those who suffered injuries from being at sea for multiple days. Additionally, Venturous assisted in the controlled transfer of nine suspected drug smugglers and approximately 1,378 pounds of illicit narcotics, ultimately leading to the prosecution of multiple narco-trafficking cases.

“This mission is inherently difficult; we see people on their worst day,” said Cmdr. Karen Kutkiewicz, commanding officer of Venturous. “Our crew embodies our core values of honor, respect, and devotion to duty every day. We take care of each other, and the detainees and migrants who cross our deck before their prosecution or repatriation.”

Halfway through the patrol, the ship’s engineers exhibited outstanding motivation, coordinating complex logistics to replace the Emergency Diesel Generator (EDG) in just 96 hours. This generator is essential for powering the critical switchboard during outages, ensuring that key systems remain operational when primary power sources fail. Replacing such crucial equipment typically requires extensive preparation and coordination over several months, followed by weeks of detailed repair work. However, through effective teamwork the process was greatly expedited, allowing Venturous to continue operations in the threat vector.

From offshore Florida, the Venturous transited south to patrol the Windward Pass between Cuba and Haiti to overtly deter those wanting to take to the seas and migrate north working with other Coast Guard and CBP assets. In most cases, migrant

vessels in this area are homemade, unseaworthy, and overcrowded requiring the Coast Guard to conduct at-sea rescues. While in the area, the cutter utilized its Creole interpreter to conduct dozens of consent-based interviews with the local population of Haiti to gather critical information on the state of their government and life in their country.

During the patrol, *Venturous*' senior members trained new members, guiding them through rigorous exercises and simulated scenarios, ensuring the crew is ready to safely navigate the ship, respond to emergencies, operate weapons systems, and handle the cutter's intricate machinery.

Between training and operations, the crew still managed to find time for morale events including fitness challenges, underway fish-calls, skeet-shooting competitions, port-call sporting events, and mess deck trivia. Additionally, recent upgrades in the ship's satellite communications have revolutionized the crew's ability to employ internet applications, including the ability to video-call loved ones back home.

Venturous is a 210-foot Reliance-class medium endurance cutter. The cutter's primary missions are counter-drug operations, migrant interdiction, and search and rescue in support of Coast Guard operations throughout the Western Hemisphere.

The [Venturous](#) was commissioned in 1968. The Reliance class of cutters will be replaced by the new Offshore Patrol Cutter (OPC) over the next several years. The OPC will provide a capability bridge between the national security cutter, which patrols the open ocean in the most demanding maritime environments, and the fast response cutter, which serves closer to shore. The ships will feature state-of-the-market technology and will replace the service's 270-foot and 210-foot medium endurance cutters, which are becoming increasingly expensive to maintain and operate.

Coast Guard Cutter Kimball Returns Home Following Bering Sea Deployment



U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Kimball (WMSL 756) conducts a passing exercise with the Royal Canadian Navy ship HMCS Regina while Kimball patrols the Bering Sea, July 18, 2024. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Ensign James Bongard.)

From U.S. Coast Guard 14th District, Aug. 7, 2024

HONOLULU – The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Kimball (WMSL 756) returned to their home port at Base Honolulu, Thursday, after completing a 122-day patrol in the Northern Pacific, Bering Sea, and American Arctic.

Kimball's crew patrolled in support of Operation Alaskan

Groundfish Enforcer, Alaskan Sentinel and Bering Shield, promoting maritime governance by enforcing domestic fishery regulations while countering illicit maritime activity from foreign fleets along the maritime boundary line.

Kimball's crew detected four Chinese surface combatants operating in vicinity of the Amchitka and Amukta Passage within the U.S. exclusive economic zone in early July. Under Operation Frontier Sentinel, Kimball monitored the Chinese vessels, meeting presence with presence to ensure there were no disruptions to U.S. interests in the maritime environment around Alaska.

Kimball's crew interacted with strategic partners in Victoria, Canada, strengthening relationships by focusing on shared interests in the Bering Sea and the expanding Arctic region. Kimball's command cadre met with senior leadership from the Royal Canadian Navy at the Canadian Maritime Forces Pacific and Joint Task Force Pacific headquarters, participating in geopolitical analysis briefs and roundtable discussions on enhancing joint maritime domain awareness in the Arctic. The visit included tours of the HMCS Ottawa, HMCS Corner Brook and culminated later in the patrol with a passing exercise with HMCS Regina, promoting interoperability with the Royal Canadian Navy and simultaneously advancing the Tri-Service Maritime Strategy through U.S. sea-service engagements.

Showcasing law enforcement expertise, Kimball's crew ensured fishing vessels in the Bering Sea were within compliance of all federal fishery conservation laws and safety requirements through the completion of twenty living marine resources boardings. Kimball's boarding team identified one vessel operating in violation of U.S. fisheries regulations, resulting in a \$4,500 violation from National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) office of law enforcement.

Kimball's crew protected U.S. economic interests monitoring

foreign fishing vessels along the maritime boundary line, preventing U.S. economic exclusion zone incursions. Kimball's law enforcement teams conducted a joint boarding with Customs and Border Protection and NOAA of a foreign flagged reefer vessel to inspect fish bait being imported into the United States strengthening federal partnerships in the region.

While operating in the Bering Sea, the crew demonstrated the multi-mission agility of the national security cutter's advanced command-and-control capabilities by coordinating Alaskan based Coast Guard air and surface assets, forming dynamic force packages that dramatically enhanced the nation's offshore search and rescue (SAR) abilities. Kimball operated with a forward deployed MH-60 Jayhawk helicopter and aircrew in Cold Bay, Alaska, and the District Seventeen command center to execute complex SAR exercises for improving, coordination, response times, and range of rotary Coast Guard assets to assist mariners in distress.

Additionally, Kimball's crew was instrumental in conducting a proof of concept fueling at sea with the Coast Guard Cutter Bailey Barco (WPC-1122), a fast response cutter (FRC) homeported in Ketchikan, Alaska. This successful evolution extended the endurance of the Bailey Barco and resulted in Bailey Barco's crew conducting over 10 vessel boardings in Bristol Bay, Alaska, an area not routinely accessed by FRCs due to logistical constraints.

During port visits in Alaska, Kimball's crew engaged with local communities. In Nome, crewmembers engaged with the tribal leadership and conducted two community outreach events, including public training and engagements for "Kids Don't Float," a statewide initiative to prevent youth drowning incidents. Kimball crewmembers demonstrated the importance of proper life jacket use and cold immersion survival. While in Dutch Harbor, crewmembers volunteered for community events including staging tents and site facilities for summer cultural camps.

“This crew excelled at operating in one of the harshest maritime environments, rising to the challenge of meeting presence with presence when encountering strategic competitors, ensuring the safety and security of U.S. fishermen, engaging with local communities, and providing overarching SAR coverage throughout the Bering Sea” said Capt. Robert Kinsey, Kimball’s commanding officer. “The Coast Guard is a key domestic and international Arctic security leader, shaping the region to promote rule of law and prevent foreign malign influence. I couldn’t be more proud of the crew’s professionalism, dedication, and ability to work together with our partners, foreign and federal, to deliver mission excellence for the American people.”

Commissioned in 2019, Kimball is one of ten commissioned Coast Guard legend-class national security cutters and one of two homeported in Honolulu. National security cutters are 418-feet long, 54-feet wide, and have a 4,600 long-ton displacement. They have a top speed more than 28 knots, a range of 12,000 nautical miles, and can hold a crew of up to 170. National security cutters routinely conduct operations throughout the Pacific and Atlantic, where their combination of range, speed, and ability to operate in extreme weather provides the mission flexibility necessary to conduct vital strategic missions.

The namesake of U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Kimball is Sumner Increase Kimball, who was organizer of the United States Life-Saving Service and the General Superintendent of the Life-Saving Service from 1878–1915. The ship’s motto is “Wield the Paddles Together: Work Together.”

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