

Coast Guard Offloads \$7.4 Million in Seized Cocaine, Transfers Custody of 9 Smugglers to DEA in San Juan, Puerto Rico



From U.S. Coast Guard 7th District, June 7, 2024

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Charles David Jr. offloaded and transferred custody of 245 kilograms of cocaine and nine suspected smugglers to Drug Enforcement Administration authorities at Coast Guard Base San Juan, Puerto Rico, Friday.

The seized contraband is estimated to have a wholesale value of \$7.4 million dollars, while the interdiction and seizure is the result of multi-agency efforts involving Coast Guard's Western Hemisphere Strategy, the Caribbean Corridor Strike Force Initiative and Operation Unified Resolve.

The Drug Enforcement Administration is leading the investigation in this case.

In the early morning hours of June 3, 2023, the crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Heriberto Hernández located a suspect vessel, approximately 75 nautical miles south of St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands. As cutter Heriberto Hernández approached, the crew observed the occupants of the suspect vessel jettison multiple packages overboard. The crew of cutter Heriberto Hernández successfully stopped the suspect vessel that had nine men onboard, who claimed to be Venezuelan nationals. The cutter crew also recovered multiple packages of the jettisoned cargo and seized a total of 10 bales and two additional bags, with individual packages, which tested positive for cocaine.

The crew of cutter Heriberto Hernández embarked the nine detainees and seized contraband that were later transferred to cutter Charles David Jr. for final transport to San Juan, Puerto Rico.

"We appreciate the efforts of Cutter Heriberto Hernández's crew as well as the work and collaboration of all other Coast Guard personnel, units and partner agencies involved in this case," said Lt. Cmdr. Edward Kunigonis, Sector San Juan chief of enforcement. "The daily work and collaboration with our federal, local and regional partners is critical to achieving successful outcomes like in this case to help safeguard the Caribbean region from this threat."

"Today's successful interdiction and seizure underscore the relentless commitment and collaboration of our federal, local, and regional partners in combating drug trafficking in the

Caribbean,” said DEA Special Agent in Charge Denise Foster. “The efforts of the Coast Guard and all agencies involved in this operation are vital to our mission of safeguarding our communities from the scourge of narcotics. The DEA will continue to lead the investigation to ensure that those responsible for these crimes are brought to justice.”

The Coast Guard’s efforts under Operation Unified Resolve contribute to the interagency results being achieved daily under Operation Caribbean Guard, which coordinates efforts between the Coast Guard, DHS, and Commonwealth and Territorial law enforcement partners, who are working diligently to deter, detect and disrupt illicit maritime trafficking to Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The Caribbean Corridor Strike Force is an initiative of the U.S. Attorney’s Office created to disrupt and dismantle major drug trafficking organizations operating in the Caribbean. CCSF is part of the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) and Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) that investigates South American-based drug trafficking organizations responsible for the movement of multi-kilogram quantities of narcotics using the Caribbean as a transshipment point for further distribution to the United States. The initiative is composed of HSI, the U.S. Attorney for the District of Puerto Rico, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the FBI, the Coast Guard, CBP and Puerto Rico Police Department’s Joint Forces for Rapid Action.

USCGC Calhoun Returns Home

Following First Deployment



From U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area, June 6, 2024

NORTH CHARLESTON, S.C. – The crew of the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Calhoun (WMSL 759) returned to their homeport in North Charleston, Monday, after completing the cutter’s first deployment.

Calhoun’s crew steamed over 3,500 nautical miles during a five-week deployment within the Coast Guard’s First and Fifth districts area of responsibility. Calhoun’s crew worked to enforce living marine resources regulations and maritime safety missions along the Eastern Seaboard. In support of operations Atlantic Venture and Ocean Hunter, Calhoun conducted 10 commercial vessel safety boardings, issued four violations, and patrolled the nation’s maritime boundary line to support the sustainability of the marine ecosystem and safety of life at sea.

“The crew was brilliant at the basics with the landing, launching helicopters, gathering intelligence, and sending out our boats with boarding teams to protect, defend, and save,”

said Capt. Timothy Sommella, Calhoun's commanding officer. "Our mission excellence at home leads to our credibility abroad as we support a rules-based, international order to combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing."

During this deployment, Calhoun participated in this year's Fleet Week in New York alongside U.S. and German naval vessels. Fleet Week is a time-honored tradition which allows the Coast Guard to demonstrate the nation's sea power and interoperability with allies and partners. The crew of Calhoun participated in a variety of external events, hosted over 4,000 tours, showcased the Coast Guard missions, and supported on-going recruitment efforts.

"There is not a better feeling than returning to homeport after a highly successful patrol," said Senior Chief Petty Officer Aaron DeLuca, Calhoun's command senior enlisted leader. "We accomplished so much in such a short deployment period. This crew was able to test and operate all our installed systems and equipment, complete certifications for our flight deck operations, and had the opportunity to partake in dozens of community outreach and public relations events. These opportunities to make lasting memories and sea stories with shipmates help entice our members to continue to serve onboard Coast Guard cutters."

This was Calhoun's first operational deployment and maiden voyage following its commissioning ceremony in North Charleston on April 20. Calhoun now joins other Charleston-based national security cutters in the fleet, including, Hamilton, James and Stone, securing the Western Hemisphere against emerging threats to the environment and food sources while safeguarding the maritime transportation system and global supply chain.

Calhoun, manned by 130 men and women, is the newest 418-foot, Legend-class cutter to join active service in the Coast Guard. The Legend-class cutter program leads the Coast Guard's

ongoing surface fleet recapitalization, and when combined with the future offshore patrol cutters, will comprise the Coast Guard's offshore response capability for decades to come. The cutter's primary missions are counter drug operations, migrant interdiction, living marine resources, defense readiness, and command and control in support of U.S. Coast Guard operations throughout the world and at home.

Calhoun's namesake comes from the first Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard, Charles L. Calhoun. Calhoun led a distinguished career, serving in the U.S. Navy during World War II prior to enlisting in the Coast Guard in 1946. Calhoun's Coast Guard career was marked by over 170 months of sea service, including service in Vietnam during the Vietnam War. Calhoun became the first Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard on Aug. 27, 1969, and was a champion for the service's enlisted personnel and is responsible for bridging the gap between the command and enlisted workforce.

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](#).

USCGC Munro Returns from Eastern Pacific Patrol; \$500M Worth of Narcotics Seized



From U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Area, 5 June 2024

ALAMEDA, Calif. – The crew aboard U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Munro (WMSL 755) returned to their home port in Alameda on Monday, following a four-month patrol off the coasts of Central and South America in the Eastern Pacific Ocean.

During their multi-mission deployment, Munro's crew conducted counter-narcotic and illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing patrols.

The 150-member crew deployed to the Eastern Pacific Ocean, where they interdicted seven "panga" style vessels, three low-profile vessels, and one fishing vessel suspected of trafficking narcotics.

The interdictions resulted in the seizure of nearly 35,000 pounds of cocaine, more than 3,000 pounds of marijuana, and more than 140 pounds of the ketamine-based hallucinogenic party drug "tuci." Combined, the seized narcotics are worth an

estimated \$500 million in wholesale value and \$2 billion in street value. [Munro conducted a bulk offload of the illicit narcotics in San Diego](#), where the narcotics were turned over to federal agents from the Drug Enforcement Administration for destruction.

Munro's crew conducted 200 flight evolutions with an embarked helicopter and aircrew from the Jacksonville, Florida-based Coast Guard Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron (HITRON). The HITRON helicopter crew was a force multiplier capable of providing airborne use of force in maritime drug interdiction efforts. Munro utilized the helicopter crew for warning shots toward eight non-compliant suspect vessels and disabling fire used on four non-compliant suspect vessels, stopping the vessels by shooting out their engines and allowing surface assets to gain positive control.

Following the counter-narcotics patrol, Munro transited further south to conduct IUU fisheries interdictions in international waters off the coast of Peru and Ecuador under Operation Southern Shield. Under the authority of the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organization (SPRFMO) conservation management measures, Munro conducted 16 high-seas boardings and inspections of a multi-national distant water fishing fleet of more than 300 fishing and transshipment vessels, resulting in nine violations reported to SPRFMO member countries.

While conducting Operation Southern Shield, Munro hosted ship observers from the Peruvian Coast Guard, the National Aeronaval Service of Panama, and the Ecuadorian Navy, emphasizing the multi-national effort to combat IUU fishing. Working alongside the Ecuadorian Navy shiprider, Munro conducted four inspections aboard Ecuadorian-flagged fishing vessels on the high seas, carrying out the first enactment of the recently signed United States-Ecuador Bilateral Agreement.

Additionally, Munro's crew [responded to a search and rescue](#) case 25 miles off the coast of Peru, saving the life of a 37-year-old patient who had been critically injured.

"Our crew is dedicated and working hard to show the commitment of the U.S. Coast Guard in combating both narcotics and Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated fishing on the high seas," said Capt. Rula Deisher, Munro's former commanding officer.

Near the end of the patrol, [Munro hosted a change of command ceremony](#) in San Diego Thursday. During the ceremony, Capt. James O'Mara IV relieved Deisher as Munro's commanding officer.

"I am thankful to family and friends who supported Munro throughout the four-month deployment," said O'Mara, who assumed command of Munro on May 30. "You won't find a crew more excited than this one, ready to be home and reconnect with families. Munro showcased all the capabilities and versatility of this platform while making tangible impacts to several national security objectives. The crew has everything to be proud of, and I am honored to join this team."

Munro is one of four national security cutters homeported on Coast Guard Base Alameda. National security cutters feature advanced command, control, communications, computers, cyber, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance equipment; aviation support facilities; stern cutter boat launch; and long-endurance station keeping. The 418-foot cutters have an endurance of 60 to 90 days and can serve as operational-level headquarters for complex law enforcement, defense, and national security missions involving the Coast Guard and multiple partner agencies.

USCGC Seneca Returns Home After Two-Month Patrol in Windward Passage, Florida Straits



U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area, May 31, 2024

PORTSMOUTH, Va. – The crew of U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Seneca (WMEC 906) returned to their home port in Portsmouth, May 21, 2024, following a 58-day migrant interdiction patrol in the Windward Passage and Florida Straits.

Seneca's crew deployed in support of Homeland Security Task Force – Southeast (HSTF-SE) and Operation Vigilant Sentry (OVS) while at sea in the Coast Guard Seventh District's area

of operations.

Patrolling off the coast of Haiti and southern Florida Straits, Seneca's presence helped deter migrants from taking to the sea in unsafe vessels to ensure the safety of life at sea and protect the maritime borders of the United States.

While at sea, Seneca worked with a Coast Guard Air Station Miami HC-144 Ocean Sentry airplane crew and responded to an international search and rescue case involving an overboard passenger who fell from a cruise ship.

During the deployment, Seneca's crew had the opportunity to attend the inaugural Fleet Week 2024 in Miami, Florida in early May. Crew members conducted nearly 1,000 public tours over a six-day period, showcasing the U.S. Coast Guard, cutter Seneca, and the service's missions. Seneca hosted numerous VIPs aboard to include Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro, local and state politicians.

"It's been an honor leading Seneca and her crew, serving alongside the best and brightest women and men in the service," said Capt. James F. McCormack, commanding officer of Seneca. "Seneca and her crew provided stability in the maritime environment of the South Florida Straits and represented the Coast Guard with distinction amongst the other U.S. maritime services at Fleet Week Miami. Seneca lived up to our motto, "Tradition of Honor, A Legacy of Action.""

While deployed, Seneca's crew transited over 9,000 nautical miles.

Established in 2003, HSTF-SE is the Department of Homeland Security-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.

Seneca is a 270-foot, Famous-class medium endurance cutter. The cutter's primary missions are counter drug operations, migrant interdiction, 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 www.GoCoastGuard.com to learn more about active duty and reserve, officer and enlisted opportunities. Information on how to apply to the U.S. Coast Guard Academy can be found [here](#).

Coast Guard Cutters Sea Dog, Sea Dragon Decommissioned in St. Marys, Georgia



Coast Guard members salute during the playing of the national anthem during a decommissioning ceremony for the Coast Guard Cutters Sea Dog and Sea Dragon in St. Marys, Georgia, May 29, 2024. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Ryan Dickinson)

U.S. Coast Guard 7th District, May 29, 2024

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – The Coast Guard decommissioned the U.S. Coast Guard cutters Sea Dog (WPB 87373) and Sea Dragon (WPB 87367), Wednesday, during a ceremony in St. Marys, Georgia.

Rear Adm. Douglas M. Schofield, Coast Guard District Seven commander, presided over the ceremony honoring the years of service the Sea Dog and Sea Dragon provided to the nation.

The Sea Dog and Sea Dragon were 87-foot marine protector-class cutters assigned to Coast Guard Maritime Force Protection Unit Kings Bay in the Coast Guard's Seventh District.

Maritime Force Protection Unit Kings Bay is designed to support the Navy's efforts to provide anti-terrorism and force protection for its Ohio-class ballistic missile submarines and

to assist in meeting its Presidential mandates for ballistic weapon security.

The Sea Dragon was commissioned in January 2008 and the Sea Dog was commissioned in July 2009.

“The men and women of the cutters Sea Dog and Sea Dragon, past and present, have exemplified unwavering professionalism and dedication, safeguarding our nation’s waters and supporting critical defense missions,” said Capt. David Vicks, commanding officer of Maritime Force Protection Unit Kings Bay. “I extend my profound gratitude to these courageous crews as we honor their steadfast service.”

Following the decommissioning ceremony, the cutters will be transferred to Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point.

The Coast Guard cutters Sea Devil (WPB 87368) and Sea Fox (WPB 87374) have relocated from Bangor, Washington, to replace the Sea Dog and Sea Dragon.

Coast Guard Crew Offloads \$468 Million Worth of Cocaine in San Diego



From U.S. Coast Guard 11th District, May 28, 2024

SAN DIEGO – The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Munro (WMSL 755) offloaded approximately 33,768 pounds of cocaine, with an estimated value of \$468 million, on Tuesday in San Diego.

The offload is a result of eight separate suspected drug smuggling vessel interdictions or events off the coasts of Mexico and Central and South America by the Coast Guard Cutter Munro in February and March.

USCGC Munro – 1,790 kg (3,946 lbs) cocaine (Feb. 21, 2024)

USCGC Munro – 1,725 kg (3,803 lbs) cocaine (Feb. 24, 2024)

USCGC Munro – 1,410 kg (3,108 lbs) cocaine (Feb. 26, 2024)

USCGC Munro – 2,136 kg (4,709 lbs) cocaine (March 10, 2024)

USCGC Munro – 3,562 kg (7,852 lbs) cocaine (March 17, 2024)

USCGC Munro – 1,289 kg (2,841 lbs) cocaine (March 18, 2024)

USCGC Munro – 1, 289 kg (2,841 lbs) cocaine (March 18, 2024)

USCGC Munro – 2,170 kg (4,784 lbs) cocaine (March 23, 2024)

“The crew put in an incredible amount of work over very long hours, and I couldn’t be prouder of them,” said Capt. Rula Deisher, commanding officer, Coast Guard Cutter Munro. “Their dedication and grit goes to show that Munro is one of the best national security cutters in the fleet, and we are committed to keeping the country safe by stopping illegal drugs before they hit the street. There isn’t a better crew to serve with and I’m honored to have spent my final patrol with them.”

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.

“I am extremely proud of this crew and their dedication to disrupting organized crime in the Eastern Pacific,” said Rear Admiral Andrew Sugimoto, commander, Coast Guard District 11. “The effort put in while interdicting more than 33,000 lbs of cocaine in a few weeks’ time is unparalleled. We will continue our commitment to stopping these criminals and the vast amounts of drugs they attempt to bring into our country.”

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 the Eleventh Coast Guard District, headquartered in Alameda, Calif. 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 Coast Guard Cutter Munro is the sixth Legend Class National Security Cutter, and is homeported in Alameda, Calif.

Common deployments include the entire Pacific Rim with port calls that may include San Diego, Kodiak, and Honolulu. Foreign destinations include countries like Mexico, Costa Rica, Panama, Guatemala, El Salvador, Ecuador, Japan and all of the Pacific Island Nations.

The Coast Guard Cutter Munro's crew can operate in the most demanding open ocean environments, including the hazardous fisheries of the North Pacific and the vast approaches of the Southern Pacific, where significant narcotics trafficking occurs.

Coast Guard releases 2023

recreational statistics

boating

From U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters, May 28, 2024

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Coast Guard released the 2023 calendar year statistics on recreational boating incidents Tuesday, reporting a decrease in fatalities and incidents.

Fatalities fell by 11.3 percent to 564 from 636 in 2022, while overall incidents decreased by 4.9 percent from 4,040 to 3,844. Non-fatal injuries also declined by 4.3 percent from 2,222 to 2,126.

Alcohol continued to be the leading known contributing factor in fatal boating accidents in 2023, accounting for 79 deaths, or 17 percent of total fatalities.

The data also shows that in 2023:

The fatality rate was 4.9 deaths per 100,000 registered recreational vessels, a 9.3 percent decrease from last year's rate of 5.4 deaths per 100,000 registered recreational vessels. (In 1971, when the Safe Boating Act was first passed, the rate was 20.6 deaths per 100,000 registered recreational vessels.)

Property damage totaled \$63 million.

Operator inattention, improper lookout, operator inexperience, excessive speed and machinery failure ranked as the top five primary contributing factors in accidents.

“Boaters should remain vigilant on the water as most incidents occur when you might least expect them – in good visibility, calm waters and little wind,” said Capt. Amy Beach, Inspections and Compliance director. “The most frequent events involve collisions with other vessels, objects or groundings,

which is why it is so important to keep a proper lookout, navigate at a safe speed, adhere to navigation rules and obey navigation aids.”

Deaths occurred predominantly on vessels operated by individuals who had not received boating safety instruction, accounting for 75 percent of fatalities. Open motorboats, personal watercraft and cabin motorboats were the vessel types most involved in reported incidents.

Drowning accounted for 75 percent of deaths, with 87 percent of those victims not wearing life jackets. The Coast Guard reminds boaters to wear serviceable, properly sized and correctly fastened life jackets.

“The most frequent event in fatal incidents involved events where people ended up in the water. A fall overboard, capsizing and cases where a person voluntarily departed a vessel accounted for over half of fatal incidents,” said Beach.

In 2023, there was a slightly higher percentage of deaths attributed to canoes and kayaks compared to other vessel types. The Coast Guard encourages boaters to check the weather and water conditions prior to getting underway.

The data in the report is based on incidents that resulted in at least one of the following criteria: death, disappearance, injury that required medical treatment beyond first aid, damages to the vessel(s) or other property that equaled or exceeded \$2,000, or a loss of vessel.

In addition to wearing a life jacket and taking a boating safety course, the Coast Guard recommends all boaters attach the engine cut-off switch, get a free vessel safety check and boat sober.

“We praise our state and non-profit partners in boating safety who have endeavored to reduce casualties through educational

outreach and enforcement,” said Beach.

The full 2023 Recreational Boating Statistics report is available to the public at <http://www.uscgboating.org>. The report can be found under the “Statistics” menu selection and the “Accident Statistics” submenu selection.

The Coast Guard encourages boaters to explore the website, which provides information about boating safety course providers, requesting a vessel safety check, what to put in a float plan, choosing the appropriate life jacket and more.

Brazil, United States partner to combat illegal fishing



The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter James (WMSL 754) moors in Rio de

Janeiro, Brazil, May 20, 2024. The James arrived in Rio de Janeiro for a scheduled port visit during Operation Southern Cross 2024. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Logan Kaczmarek)

From U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area, May 23, 2024

RIO DE JANEIRO – U.S. Coast Guard Cutter James (WMSL 754) arrived in the port of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil for a scheduled visit, Monday.

This visit marks James' third stop as the cutter continues its multi-mission deployment in the South Atlantic Ocean, exhibiting the U.S. Coast Guard's partnership with Brazil and strengthening the interoperability of the two nations' maritime forces to counter illicit maritime activity and promote maritime sovereignty throughout the region.

"Working with the Brazilian navy has been a successful demonstration of how our countries can work together," said U.S. Coast Guard Capt. Donald Terkanian, James' commanding officer. "James has had the opportunity to enhance relations between the U.S. and Brazil while also addressing the threats posed by illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, port security, and in facilitating safe and lawful maritime commerce and travel."

James embarked Brazilian navy Lt. Cmdr. Fernando Schild in April of 2024. Brazil and the United States' naval services both use unmanned aerial systems to provide increased maritime domain awareness across a variety of mission sets. The embarked Brazilian officer is part of Brazil's first ship-based unmanned aerial systems squadron, and the embarkation of this officer aboard James highlights the robust partnership between the two nations and their shared commitment to upholding the rules-based international order at sea.

In recent years, the United States and Brazil have partnered to share and exchange maritime tactics, techniques, and procedures. Since 2009, the U.S. Coast Guard has provided 34

mobile training team deployments and three resident training courses to Brazil in the areas of crisis management, mobile command systems, port security, maritime law enforcement, search and rescue, and disaster response. Both countries are dedicated to the responsible management of marine resources, demonstrating their shared commitment through the continued integration of their naval forces.

James, staffed by 150 men and women and is one of the largest and most technologically advanced ships in the Coast Guard's fleet. The crew is dedicated to missions including combatting drug trafficking and monitoring for illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing activities in the Atlantic. Their work not only supports U.S. interests but also contributes to regional stability and security.

James is the fifth Legend-class national security cutter in the Coast Guard fleet and is currently homeported in Charleston, South Carolina. The national security cutters can execute the most challenging national security missions, including support to U.S. combatant commanders.

James is under the command of U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area. Based in Portsmouth, Virginia, U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area oversees all Coast Guard operations east of the Rocky Mountains to the Arabian Gulf. In addition to surge operations, they also allocate ships to work with partner commands and deploy to the Caribbean and Eastern Pacific to combat transnational organized crime and illicit maritime activity.

U.S. Coast Guard Visit to Republic of Palau Strengthens Maritime Navigation and Cooperation



U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia Sector Guam personnel and Marine Transportation leadership observe the installation of fixed ATON from the government of Japan being installed in Palau on May 14, 2024. The team completed a vital weeklong mission in the Republic of Palau, setting the stage for future collaboration and bolstering safe maritime navigation and security. This visit, in response to a request from Palau Marine Transportation, focused on an Aids to Navigation (ATON)

Subject Matter Expert Exchange (SMEE). (U.S. Coast Guard photo)

From U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam, May 20, 2024

KOROR, Republic of Palau – On May 14, 2024, the U.S. Coast Guard completed a vital weeklong mission in the Republic of Palau, setting the stage for future collaboration and bolstering safe maritime navigation and security.

This visit, in response to a request from Palau Marine Transportation, focused on an Aids to Navigation (ATON) Subject Matter Expert Exchange (SMEE). The exchange laid the foundation for a future SMEE planned for later in the year, including personnel from the 225-foot sea-going buoy tender, USCGC Hickory (WLB 212).

Palau, a nation consisting of approximately 340 islands and renowned for its maritime heritage and strategic location in the Pacific, plays a crucial role in regional maritime safety, security, and environmental stewardship. With its vibrant tourism industry and commitment to marine conservation, Palau's efforts are vital for the economic and ecological health of the region.

Lt. Anna Maria Vaccaro and Lt. Jay DeInnocentiis led the U.S. Coast Guard SMEE team. They met with Palau Marine Transportation leadership and ATON technicians to discuss the fixed and floating ATON constellation in Palau. The team also reviewed the equipment storage and set-up for fixed and floating aids. They went to sea with the marine transportation team to inspect the aids on the reef and observed the establishment of a fixed aid.

Palau requested U.S. Coast Guard assistance with establishing four additional fixed aids in locations challenged by the rapid depth changes and strong currents. A microbeacon barge,

a type of barge equipped with microbeacon technology which often is used for shallow water ATON positioning and coastal navigation, is the most suitable asset for this task due to the channel's bathymetry. The barge is provided by the U.S. Coast Guard and will be delivered by USCGC Hickory upon the buoy tender's arrival back to the Western Pacific. The Palauan team plans to use the microbeacon barge for servicing coastal aids to navigation in shallow waters.

In addition to the SMEE, Capt. Nicholas Simmons, U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam commander, and Capt. Robert Kistner, the incoming commander, traveled to Palau for brief yet impactful introductions and to express gratitude for the support received during Capt. Simmons' tenure as commander.

Strategic Importance of ATON

The strategic relationship between the U.S. Coast Guard and the Republic of Palau is vital for ensuring maritime safety, security, and prosperity in the Pacific region. The ATON system is crucial for safe navigation, preventing maritime accidents, and ensuring the smooth flow of marine transportation. This system supports economic activities, fisheries, and the overall security of maritime routes, which are essential for Palau and its partners.

"The economic and environmental value of ATON in maintaining a safe and efficient maritime transportation system cannot be overstated," said Capt. Simmons. "Our collaboration with Palau Marine Transportation demonstrates our commitment to enhancing maritime safety and supporting our partners in the Pacific. It has been a privilege to be in Palau, and I am profoundly grateful for the exceptional relationship and hospitality extended to us."

Trip Highlights

- **Leadership Engagement:** Lt. Vaccaro and Lt. DeInnocentiis met with senior leaders at Palau Marine Transportation to discuss the ATON constellation. They observed the implementation of fixed aids provided by the government of Japan and witnessed the installation of a fixed aid on the reef.
- **Promotion Ceremony:** They observed the promotion ceremony of a U.S. Naval colleague Cmdr. Brendan Kruse, COFA Security Cooperation Officer, further supporting Department of Defense relationships in the region.
- **Community Participation:** Lt. Vaccaro participated in Palau National Police Week's 5K Walkathon and candlelight vigil.
- **Key Introductions:** Capt. Kistner met with critical partners in Palau, including National Security Coordinator Ms. Jen Anson, U.S. Embassy Palau Charge d'Affaires Mr. Andrew McLean, and U.S. Maritime Advisor to Marine Law Ms. Jennifer Ketchum (USCG Ret.). The team toured the Port of Malakal, the Joint Operations Center, and visited the PSS Remeliik II, a Guardian-class patrol boat in the service of Palau's Division of Maritime Law Enforcement, built and provided by Australia.

Future Support

The Service tentatively plans an ATON SMEE accompanied by the Hickory and crew for late 2024 to further engage with Palauan partners and establish a realistic timeline for servicing aids in Palau. This continued partnership underscores the U.S. Coast Guard's commitment to supporting maritime navigation and security in the region, reinforcing the positive impacts and legacy of reliability.

"Our continued collaboration with the Republic of Palau is a testament to the strong strategic partnership we share," said Capt. Kistner. "By working together, we can enhance Palau's maritime transportation system and build local capacity, ensuring the safety and security of its waters and contributing to the stability of the broader Pacific region."

We are deeply grateful for Palau's cooperation and support in this mission."

The U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam team focuses on maritime safety, security, and stewardship in Oceania. With a primary presence in Guam and Saipan and over 300 members across Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the team maintains a strong U.S. presence in the Micronesia sub-region and adjacent areas, closely tied to local communities.

U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area holds change-of-command ceremony



US Coast Guard Atlantic Area Vice Admirals Nathan Moore and Kevin Lunday salute one another while Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Linda Fagan presides over a change-of-command ceremony, May 16, 2024, in Yorktown, Virginia. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Brandon Hillard)

From U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area, May 16, 2024

PORTSMOUTH, Va. – Vice Adm. Nathan Moore relieved Vice Adm. Kevin Lunday as the U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area commander, Thursday, during a change-of-command ceremony held on Coast Guard Training Center Yorktown.

Adm. Linda Fagan, commandant of the Coast Guard, presided over the ceremony.

Lunday will report for duty in Washington, D.C. as the Coast Guard's vice commandant. He served as the U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area commander, director of Department of Homeland Security Joint Task Force East (JTF-E), and Defense Force East commander from May 2022 to May 2024.

While leading complex security operations from the Rocky

Mountains eastward to the Arabian Gulf, he led the efforts to address substantial national and international challenges. His deployment of assets to the Arctic, South Atlantic, Africa, Mediterranean Sea, and the Middle East directly supported the [Tri-Service Maritime Strategy](#) and greatly enhanced cooperation with the joint force, allies, and partners.

Pre-positioning of Coast Guard personnel and equipment during hurricane seasons saved lives, mitigated environmental disasters, and led to the expeditious restoration of the maritime transportation system, which is critical to the U.S. economy.

Additionally, Lunday orchestrated the Coast Guard's surge response to historic maritime migration levels along the U.S. Southeast maritime border. His expertise and adjudication of competing demands fostered an increased readiness posture and led to the deployment of additional personnel and surface assets. These actions were key to saving lives and preventing a deadly mass migration.

As Director of JTF-E, he advanced joint operations and cross-component collaboration while spearheading modernization efforts, promoting interoperability among interagency partners, and championing innovative approaches to information-sharing. His efforts forged a sustainable joint architecture and galvanized Departmental unity of effort in an increasingly complex maritime environment.

Vice Adm. Moore is reporting from U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area in Portsmouth, Virginia, where he served as the deputy commander. He previously served as the U.S. Coast Guard Seventeenth District commander, responsible for operations throughout Alaska, the North Pacific Ocean, the Arctic Ocean, and the Bering Sea. Other assignments include the assistant commandant for Engineering and Logistics (CG-4), responsible for all naval, aeronautical, civil, and industrial engineering and logistics for the service, and various operational and

engineering assignments, including command afloat.

Moore graduated from the United States Coast Guard Academy with a bachelor's degree in naval architecture and marine engineering. He went on to earn two master's degrees from the University of Michigan, one in naval architecture and marine engineering and the other in business administration. Most recently, he earned a third master's degree in national resource strategy from the Eisenhower School.

U.S. Coast Guard's Atlantic Area command oversees all domestic Coast Guard operations east of the Rocky Mountains, including the Arctic, Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, Caribbean, and out-of-hemisphere operations in Europe, Africa, and Southwest Asia. Atlantic Area encompasses five regional district commands, each tasked with running day-to-day operations within their areas of responsibility. Atlantic Area is responsible for coordinating and deploying cutters, aircraft, pollution response equipment, and thousands of personnel between districts when significant events occur. After major disasters, the area team assists districts by ensuring resources, equipment, and personnel surge to impacted areas for rescue and recovery efforts while also providing for other Coast Guard operations throughout the region.

JTF-E coordinates and synchronizes DHS cross-component operations to target, dismantle, and disrupt illicit enterprises, prepare for and respond to mass maritime migration, and ready the DHS enterprise to respond to emerging threats along the Southeast maritime border.

The change-of-command ceremony is a military tradition representing a formal transfer of authority and responsibility for a unit from one commanding or flag officer to another. The passing of colors, standards, or ensigns from an outgoing commander to an incoming one ensures that the unit and its members are never without official leadership, a continuation of trust.