

US Coast Guard Cutter Hamilton completes four-month deployment, returns to homeport in Charleston



Crews from Coast Guard cutters Hamilton (WMSL 753) and Munro (WMSL 755) exchange cutter boats in the Pacific Ocean, March 12, 2024. Hamilton and Munro are national security cutters. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Ensign Ray Corniel)
U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area, April 1, 2024

NORTH CHARLESTON, S.C. – The crew of the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Hamilton (WMSL 753) returned to their homeport in North Charleston, Friday, following a four-month maritime safety and security patrol in the Western Atlantic and Eastern Pacific Ocean.

Patrolling in support of Homeland Security Task Force –

Southeast's Operation Vigilant Sentry and Joint Interagency Task Force – South's (JIATF-S) counterdrug mission, Hamilton's crew interdicted four vessels trafficking illicit narcotics, apprehended 10 suspected drug smugglers, rescued 47 migrants on an unsafe voyage at sea, and assisted six mariners in distress.

While underway, Hamilton worked to counter illicit maritime activities, strengthen partner nation ties, and facilitate the safety of life at sea. Hamilton interdicted 7,448 pounds of marijuana from four drug trafficking ventures worth more than \$7 million. In support of JIATF-S, Hamilton assisted Panamanian and Costa Rican partners with two additional interdictions for a combined 5,800 pounds of cocaine, worth approximately \$76 million.

On Christmas Eve, Hamilton's crew spotted a U.S.-flagged sailing vessel with three people aboard, requesting assistance during rough seas. Hamilton sent over a rescue and assistance team to assist them with retrieving their adrift dinghy, restored their engines, provided medical aid, and escorted them safely back to Florida. In another case, Hamilton spotted a Panamanian fishing vessel's crew waving for help. Hamilton deployed their rescue and assistance team to evaluate the nature of their distress. Once on-scene, they found three fishermen with their vessel adrift after fighting an engine fire. Hamilton provided medical aid and water while remaining on-scene until relieved by Panamanian authorities.

"I am so proud of our crew's flexibility, resiliency, and superb execution of duty," said Capt. Justin Carter, commanding officer of Hamilton. "We accomplished every task asked of us, whether countering drug smugglers, responding to unsafe migrant ventures, or aiding mariners at sea. Performing these missions required expert operation and maintenance of our ship, boats, and aircraft, and our crew took care of each other through every challenge we faced."

Hamilton also conducted at-sea trainings with Coast Guard cutters Munro (WMSL 755), Bear (WMEC 901) and an MH-65 helicopter crew from the Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron.

Hamilton is one of four 418-foot National Security Cutters (NSC) homeported in Charleston. With its robust command, control, communication, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance equipment, the NSC is the most technologically advanced ship in the Coast Guard's fleet. NSCs are a world-wide deployable asset that supports Department of Homeland Security, Department of Defense, and national objectives through drug interdiction, migrant interdiction, national defense, search and rescue, fisheries enforcement, and national intelligence collection.

For more information about Hamilton, visit <https://www.atlanticarea.uscg.mil/Area-Cutters/CGCHAMILTON/>.

For information on how to join the U.S. Coast Guard, visit 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](#).

Joint operation leads to cocaine seizure in Bahamas



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

MIAMI – U.S. Coast Guard Air Station Borinquen aircrews assisted the Royal Bahamas Police Force and the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration with the transfer and disposition of approximately 391 kilos of cocaine worth an estimated value of \$7.5 million, Tuesday, at the Mayaguana Airport in The Bahamas.

Operation Bahamas Turks and Caicos partners collaborated to interdict the contraband.

The Royal Bahamas Police Force Drug Enforcement Unit coordinated with Mayaguana Airport Police and DEA agents to seize a suspected smuggling aircraft and discovered the contraband.

The RBPF took custody of a suspected smuggler and the RBPF public affairs and communication department reported that the case investigation is ongoing.

The drug bust follows the recent 2024 Northern Caribbean

Security Summit held in The Bahamas earlier this month. The NOCSS was the third-annual meeting between executive and law enforcement leaders from the United States, The Bahamas, the Turks and Caicos Islands, and the United Kingdom. At the summit, leaders discussed ways to modernize, integrate, and position joint security relationships to confront the complex threats of the 21st century. NOCSS partners continuously work across the region to dismantle criminal networks, block malign actors, support strong judiciaries, and stop the trafficking of drugs, guns, wildlife, and people.

OPBAT is a partnership between the DEA, U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, the U.S. Department of State, and law enforcement entities of The Commonwealth of The Bahamas and the Turks and Caicos Islands to stop the flow of illicit narcotics through the Caribbean, destined for the United States or other jurisdictions. OPBAT assets also regularly assist with prosecuting human smuggling and search and rescue cases throughout its area of responsibility.

Unmanned Systems Help Coast Guard Members Navigate the Future



By David Santos, Coast Guard Academy External Affairs, March 27, 2024

U.S. Coast Guard leaders envision a future where Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) launched from Coast Guard cutters monitor air and surface contacts or fly autonomously inside large ships to inspect vessel tanks and other hazardous compartments.

Or, using sensors small enough to be installed on small UASs or Autonomous Underwater Vehicles (AUV), measure surface oil spill thickness and help direct assets to heavily impacted areas during oil spill responses.

These future scenarios are some of the strategic objectives outlined in the service's Unmanned Systems Strategic Plan,

which was released last year.

The Coast Guard has been exploring the use of long, medium, and short range unmanned aerial systems since 2008 to provide a cost effective way to increase the operational presence of the service in an increasingly complex maritime environment.

Today cadets, faculty, and staff members at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy are taking the next step in helping to make this vision of the future a reality.

Capt. Brian Maggi and retired Capt. Daniel Burbank, faculty members from the Academy's Engineering Department, are helping to build a network of licensed drone operators. Their goal is to increase the number of Coast Guard members capable of using the technology in the fleet to help bridge the gap between the huge responsibilities the service is tasked with and the limited resources it is given.

As qualified Short Range Unmanned Aerial System (SR-UAS) Instructor Pilots, Maggi and Burbank are currently teaching a course to help a wide range of Academy personnel complete all the requirements to earn the Coast Guard SR-UAS qualification by the end of the semester.

"The initial solicitation for this course resulted in 60 cadet responses," Maggi said. "Many of our cadets are already experienced UAS pilots and know the capabilities of these systems better than we do. As Instructor Pilots, we can empower this group to help the Coast Guard innovate how UAS are integrated into operations and mission support. For the cadets and Coast Guard personnel with limited or no experience, the goal is to foster their curiosity to inspire them to grow into this community and create awareness of how these systems may be a force multiplier for all Coast Guard missions."

"It's very inspiring to see how quickly the cadets learn how

to precisely fly the drones and how to use the high resolution electro-optical and infrared imagers for target detection and identification,” Burbank said. “They’ve got great ‘stick and rudder’ flying skills,” he adds, “and are innovative in the ways they use the dozens of flight and imagery modes to get the most benefit from system capabilities.”

Future plans call for establishing a 3-credit course that would teach cadets how to acquire imagery and video for engineering, science, and Coast Guard mission support. From there an expansion into the Cyber Systems and Operations Research & Data Analytics majors is planned to support the use of this technology in a variety of Coast Guard missions.

“Having come from an organization where human operators routinely use robotic systems to augment and extend their reach and vision, this feels much the same,” said Burbank, who completed several spaceflight missions as one of three Astronauts who have graduated from the Academy. “These systems with talented and trained humans-in-the-loop will make the Coast Guard much more effective just as they do NASA.”

As our maritime infrastructure and environment becomes more complex, Coast Guard personnel will be ready to employ unmanned systems to advance the safety and security of U.S. ports and waterways.

**Unified Command, Joint
Information Center**

Established for Key Bridge Response 2024



BALTIMORE – A Unified Command and Joint Information Center have been established in Baltimore Wednesday to coordinate response and disseminate information for the Francis Scott Key Bridge collapse on Tuesday morning.

The Key Bridge Response 2024 Unified Command includes the:

- U.S. Coast Guard
- Maryland Department of the Environment
- Maryland Transportation Authority
- Maryland State Police
- Synergy Marine

A website with incident response information can be found at the following URL:

<https://www.keybridgeresponse2024.com>

The media is requested to call the Joint Information Center at 410-631-8939 for interview response inquiries and interviews.

The Unified Command's operational priorities are ensuring the safety of the public and first responders, accountability of missing persons, protecting the environment, incident stabilization, safely restoring transportation infrastructure and commerce, and supporting the investigation.

Coast Guard Cutter Sustains Damage During Transit Into St. Marys River

From U.S. Coast Guard 7th District Public Affairs Detachment Jacksonville

March 26, 2024

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Sea Dog (WPB 87373) sustained damage during the crew's inbound transit from sea to the St. Marys River, Monday.

The cutter Sea Dog safely moored in Fernandina Beach, Florida, with assistance from additional Coast Guard assets and a commercial towing vessel.

There were no injuries to personnel, no damage to other vessels in the area, no impediments to the navigable waterway, and no reported environmental impacts as a result of the incident.

The incident is under investigation.

The Sea Dog is an 87-foot marine protector-class cutter assigned to Coast Guard Maritime Force Protection Unit Kings Bay in the Coast Guard's Seventh District.

US Coast Guard Cutter Venturous Returns Home to Florida Following Multi-Mission Deployment



U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area, March 26, 2024

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. – The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Venturous

(WMEC 625) crew returned to their homeport in St. Petersburg, Friday, after a 60-day Caribbean patrol supporting Homeland Security Task Force – Southeast’s Operation Vigilant Sentry and Joint Interagency Task Force – South’s counterdrug missions.

While on patrol, the crew of Venturous repatriated 65 migrants. The migrants were safely transferred to Venturous from Coast Guard cutters Dauntless, Forward and Vigilant. Aboard Venturous, the migrants were given food, water, and basic medical care before being repatriated to the Haitian coast guard in Cap-Haïtien, Haiti.

Venturous patrolled the South Florida Straits and Windward Passage within the Coast Guard Seventh District’s area of responsibility to conduct maritime safety and security missions while working to detect, deter, and intercept unsafe and unlawful migrant ventures bound for the United States.

The Venturous also hosted the commandant and chief of naval operations of the Dominican navy during their port call in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, to discuss capabilities, training, and partnerships in the region.

“Our highest priority is to prevent the tragic loss of life at sea,” said Cmdr. Karen L. Kutkiewicz, commanding officer of Venturous. “Often, interdicting migrants attempting to illegally enter the southeast maritime border turns into urgent rescue when homemade, overloaded, and dangerously unsafe vessels attempt passage. This mission is challenging both mentally and physically on our crew. I am proud of the crew’s care and professionalism displayed in this humanitarian mission.”

OVS was first established in 2004 as the operational plan to prevent, deter, prepare for, respond to, and recover from maritime migration events in the Caribbean.

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 U.S. Coast Guard operations throughout the Western Hemisphere.

For more information about OVS and the cases mentioned in this release, please click [here](#).

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, Multiple Partners Responding to Bridge Collapse in Baltimore

U.S. Coast Guard 5th District, March 26, 2024

BALTIMORE – The U.S. Coast Guard is coordinating with local, state, and federal agencies in response to the Francis Scott Key Bridge collapse in Baltimore Tuesday morning.

Coast Guard watchstanders received a report into the Coast Guard Sector Maryland – National Capital Region command center at 1:27 a.m. reporting a 948-foot Singapore-flagged containership collided with the Francis Scott Key Bridge.

Additionally, it was reported that the bridge collapsed and there were reports of persons in the water.

Response boat crews from Coast Guard Stations Curtis Bay and Annapolis have crews deployed to the incident for active

search and rescue.

A Coast Guard Air Station Atlantic City MH-65 Dolphin helicopter crew and Coast Guard investigators and pollution responders are also en-route to the incident.

An Urgent Marine Information Broadcast is issued regarding the incident and there has been a 2000-yard safety zone issued for the surrounding waters. Mariners are urged to avoid the area.

Coast Guard to Commission New FRC in New London, Connecticut



NEW LONDON, Connecticut – The Coast Guard Cutter Melvin Bell (WPC-1155) is scheduled to be commissioned during a ceremony March 28 at 10 a.m. at the Coast Guard Academy in New London.

The Coast Guard's newest cutter was accepted by the Coast Guard on November 16, 2023, and will be the sixth and final fast response cutter homeported in Boston.

The Sentinel-class fast response cutter (FRC) is designed for multiple missions, including drug and migrant interdiction; ports, waterways and coastal security; fishery patrols; search and rescue; and national defense. The Coast Guard has ordered a total of 65 FRCs to replace the 1980s-era Island-class 110-foot patrol boats. The FRCs feature advanced command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance equipment; over-the-horizon cutter boat deployment to reach vessels of interest; and improved habitability and seakeeping.

All Coast Guard fast response cutters are named after an enlisted Coast Guard hero who distinguished themselves in the line of duty. Melvin Kealoha Bell was a master chief electronics technician and served in the Coast Guard from November 1938 to December 1958. ETCM Melvin Bell distinguished himself during World War II by transmitting the first warning messages to military installations in Pearl Harbor on the morning of December 7, 1941, when the Japanese attacked. He continued to prove instrumental throughout the war as he helped break enemy codes leading to numerous victories, including the Battle of Midway and in an operation to break up a Nazi espionage network in New York City. ETCM Bell became the first Pacific Islander to achieve the rank of chief petty officer, the first master chief electronics technician and the first master chief petty officer of color.

U.S., Seychelles Conduct Bilateral Maritime Security engagements



March 24, 2024

[By U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa Public Affairs and U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area Public Affairs](#)

NAPLES, Italy –

Over the course of 7 days from March 14-21, 2024, United States Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment (LEDET) personnel worked alongside their counterparts in the Seychelles Coast Guard during multiple bilateral maritime security engagements in Seychelles' Exclusive Economic Zone

(EEZ).

These events included identifying vessels suspected in engaging in illicit activity or illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing in Seychelles' EEZ, which extends into significant portions of East Africa and the Western Indian Ocean. After identification, the U.S. and Seychelles teamed up to intercept vessels of interest to conduct compliant boardings of Seychelles-flagged vessels, ensuring adherence to Seychelles Maritime law.

“Our cooperation on maritime security is a visible sign of our mutual goal of a more secure and prosperous Indian Ocean Region,” said U.S. Embassy Seychelles Chargé d’Affaires, Adham Loutfi. “It gives me enormous satisfaction to know that Seychelles and the United States continue to work side by side—demonstrating great dedication, courage, and sacrifice—to ensure the safety and security of our maritime spaces.”

These bilateral engagements come immediately after the East African maritime exercise Cutlass Express 2024, which was hosted by Djibouti, Kenya and the Seychelles. Cutlass Express focused on a variety of maritime security and stability issues, providing invaluable training and realistic scenarios for partners and Allies that they can then apply in real world operations, as is the case here.

“The 2024 enactment of the U.S.-Seychelles Bilateral agreement is the second major operation performed with our key Indian Ocean partner, Seychelles Coast Guard, since the agreement was signed in 2021,” said Cmdr. Beau Powers, Chief of law enforcement operations at U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area. “Seychelles is a distinctly maritime nation, committed to meeting obligations to counter Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing as well as deterring illicit maritime activity. The U.S. Coast Guard is committed to performing combined operations with our highly capable counterparts in the Seychelles Coast Guard to stem such global problems.

Training on law enforcement tactics, practicing information exchange, and then working together in operational law enforcement patrols, bolsters maritime security in a perfect demonstration of the U.S. and Seychelles' commitment to keeping the international rules-based order in this region."

Seychelles Special Forces, agents from Seychelles Maritime Safety Authority, the Seychelles Fishery Authority, and the U.S. Coast Guard kicked off the bilateral engagement on March 14. From day one, the team completed joint small boat sorties and maritime operations center communication rehearsals as part of a harmonization period to bring the team together. Once underway aboard the Seychelles Coast Guard ship SAYA DE MALHA, their meticulous planning and pre-underway coordination was evident as their efforts led to eight vessel boardings and over 700 nautical miles steamed throughout the West Indian Ocean.

This also continues a history of maritime cooperation between the United States and the Seychelles, as both nations are committed to preserving peace and stability, upholding freedom of the seas in a manner consistent with international law, maintaining the unimpeded flow of commerce, and opposing any attempt to use coercion or force to settle disputes. In addition to Coast Guard operations and the Cutlass Express series of exercises, the Lewis B. Puller-class expeditionary sea base USS Hershel "Woody" Williams (ESB 4) conducted a port visit in Victoria in July 2022, and U.S. Navy Divers have collaborated with Seychellois Divers to conduct survey and salvage missions in the Seychelles as recently as January 2023, demonstrating the diversity of cooperation between the two nations in the maritime domain.

The Coast Guard Atlantic Area located in Portsmouth, Virginia, is responsible for overseeing all Coast Guard operations from the Rocky Mountains to the Arabian Gulf.

For over 80 years, U.S. Naval Forces Europe-U.S. Naval Forces

Africa (NAVEUR-NAVAF) has forged strategic relationships with Allies and partners, leveraging a foundation of shared values to preserve security and stability.

Headquartered in Naples, Italy, NAVEUR-NAVAF operates U.S. Naval forces in the U.S. European Command (USEUCOM) and U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM) areas of responsibility. U.S. Sixth Fleet is permanently assigned to NAVEUR-NAVAF, and employs maritime forces through the full spectrum of joint and naval operations.

USCGC Legare Returns Home Following Living Marine Resources Patrol, Engagements With French Navy



Crews from the Coast Guard Cutter Legare (WMEC 912) and the

French naval ship Premier-Maître L'Her (F792) take a group photo aboard Legare, off the coast of Long Island, New York, on March 16, 2024. Legare worked with Premier-Maître L'Her for a series of engagements and exercises designed to demonstrate interoperability with a critical NATO partner. *U.S. Coast Guard*

PORTSMOUTH, Va. – The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Legare (WMEC 912) returned home to Portsmouth, Thursday, after a seven-week patrol in the Coast Guard's First District area of operations.

In support of Operation Atlantic Venture, Legare steamed more than 6,300 nautical miles, patrolling the coast of New England, New York, and near the Gulf of Maine, to conduct maritime safety missions, while bolstering the safety and sustainability of the marine ecosystem through enforcement of living marine resources regulations.

Legare's crew completed 41 commercial fishing vessel boardings and two recreational vessel boardings, resulting in seven violations of safety or regulatory standards.

During the patrol, the Legare crew completed joint training evolutions with U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Maurice Jester (WPC 1152), Coast Guard Air Station Cape Cod, and the French naval ship Premier-Maître L'Her (F792). Legare worked with Premier-Maître L'Her for a series of engagements and exercises designed to demonstrate interoperability with a critical NATO partner.

"The officers and crew of Legare performed up to the high standards of the United States Coast Guard for this deployment," said Cmdr. Jeremy Greenwood, Legare's commanding officer. "The success in this deployment was measured not just in the sheer number of boardings we conducted, but also by our ability to maintain defense readiness, serve the American public, as well as protect the environment we live in."

Legare also collaborated with the Coast Guard Recruiting

Office Providence, Rhode Island, to host a recruiting event at the Massachusetts Maritime Academy. Legare gave tours to more than 300 cadets, 150 Junior Reserve Officer Training Course cadets, and 50 civilian visitors.

The Legare is a 270-foot, Famous-class medium-endurance cutter. The cutter's primary missions are counter drug operations, migrant interdiction, enforcement of federal fishery laws, and search and rescue in support of U.S. Coast Guard operations throughout the Western Hemisphere.

For information on how to join the U.S. Coast Guard, visit [GoCoastGuard.com](https://www.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](#).