

USCGC Alder returns to home port after conducting first high-seas boardings off the coast of Peru, under new SPRFMO measure



Release from U.S. Coast Guard District 11

Nov. 29, 2023

ALAMEDA, Calif. – The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Alder, along with the crews of the Terrell Horne and an HC-130 Hercules aircraft recently completed the first high-seas boardings and inspections, in the Eastern Pacific Ocean, under a newly adopted conservation and management measure to monitor and inspect fishing and supply vessel operations at-sea in the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organization (SPRFMO) Convention Area.

The crew of the Alder performed many new operations that took them south of the equator, where they would participate in SPRFMO inspections, conducting boardings and overflights within the SPRFMO Convention Area on the high seas off the

coast of Peru. For years, the Coast Guard has executed counter-illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing operations and participated in high seas boarding and inspections (HSBI) around the globe. This operation was significant as it was timed to implement newly adopted rules in the SPRFMO Convention Area, which comprises nearly a quarter of the Earth's high seas. The SPRFMO Commission consists of 17 members from Asia, Europe, the Americas, and Oceania, as well as two cooperating non-contracting parties.

The Alder crew also conducted counter narcotics operations, trained two crew members for aerial drone missions launched from the cutter, and sailed with four small boats attached to maintain maximum operational capability during the patrol. The crew also hosted numerous high-level officials while in Paita and Lima, Peru.

The Alder crew participated in GALAPEX 2023, a recurring joint and multinational exercise hosted by Ecuador and executed in the vicinity of the Galapagos Islands. The crew conducted communications exercises, practiced counter-narcotics boarding scenarios, and hosted observers from Peru, Ecuador, and Brazil. GALAPEX culminated with full-scale exercises focused on a coordinated multinational response to counter IUU fishing. At the conclusion of the exercise, the Coast Guard patrolled south to focus on high seas boarding inspections off the coast of Peru.

IUU fishing has replaced piracy as the leading global maritime security threat. Areas out on the high seas, beyond any country's exclusive economic zone, can be exploited by fishers engaged in IUU fishing, as they fish beyond the reach of most law enforcement entities. The Coast Guard's actions provide inspection presence on the high seas among a distant water fishing fleet made up of more than 400 fishing and transshipment vessels. Much of the fishing in the Eastern Pacific is accomplished by these distant water fishing vessels, some which remain at sea for years at a time, and

many of which are supported by supply vessels. The Coast Guard's recent operation directly supported Central and South American partners and their desire to monitor and expand maritime domain awareness of fishing activity near their exclusive economic zones.

"Unprecedented missions like this give cutter crews purpose and meaning," said Lt. Cmdr. Paul Ledbetter, commanding officer U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Alder. "They help the Coast Guard's retention, and they give our sailors stories that they will carry with them forever. Suffice to say, our crew understood the importance of what we were doing, and we are proud of what we accomplished."

Coast Guard Cutter Legare returns home to Virginia following a 73-day deployment



[Release from U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area](#)

Nov. 24, 2023

PORTSMOUTH, Va. – The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Legare (WMEC 912) returned home to Portsmouth, Friday, concluding a nearly 10-week deployment to the Windward Passage and the South Florida Straits. Additionally, Legare supported the Coast Guard's Eighth District as the offshore command and control cutter in response to an oil discharge in the Gulf of Mexico.

The crew of the Legare steamed over 12,000 nautical miles in support of Homeland Security Task Force – Southeast and Operation Vigilant Sentry within the Coast Guard Seventh District's area of responsibility.

During the patrol, Legare interdicted one go-fast vessel off the coast of Cap-Haïtien, Haiti, preventing an irregular, unlawful, and dangerous journey of 20 migrants from an overloaded vessel in unsafe sea conditions.

Legare worked alongside other Coast Guard cutters and

Department of Homeland Security units to promote maritime safety and secure maritime borders, targeting unsafe migration and human trafficking from Cuba and Haiti, while prioritizing the protection of lives at sea.

Legare also patrolled the Gulf of Mexico, in response to an oil discharge approximately 20 miles northeast of the mouth of the Mississippi River.

“I am very proud of the crew of Legare and our ability to come together and ensure we do our part in maintaining the safety of life at sea and securing our nation’s maritime borders,” said Cmdr. Jeremy Greenwood, Legare’s commanding officer. “This mission is never easy, but we understand the importance of deterring unlawful migration incidents that involve attempting dangerous journeys on often overloaded and unseaworthy vessels. We reiterate the plea to those attempting these transits to the United States to seek safe, lawful alternatives.”

Migrants attempting to reach the United States unlawfully by sea, or who land on U.S. shores without authorization, are subject to removal and repatriation to their country of origin or departure. Consistent with U.S. policy, those who bypass or attempt to circumvent lawful immigration pathways face consequences including the potential of being barred from future lawful entry in addition to risking their lives unnecessarily.

Legare is a 270-foot medium-endurance cutter homeported in Portsmouth, Virginia. 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. The medium endurance cutters fall under the command of the 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, Atlantic Area also allocates ships to deploy to the Caribbean and Eastern Pacific to combat transnational organized crime and illicit maritime activity.

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

Learn more about Operation Vigilant Sentry here: <https://www.news.uscg.mil/Press-Releases/Article/3280774/operation-vigilant-sentry-stopping-illegal-migration-at-sea/>

Coast Guard completes two-week operation in Pacific region



U.S. Coast Guard District 14

[Release from U.C. Coast Guard 14th District](#)

Nov. 20, 2023

HONOLULU – The U.S. Coast Guard has concluded Operation Kuru Kuru, an annually held comprehensive two-week operation in the Pacific region, highlighting the Coast Guard’s commitment to supporting international partners in the region.

Operation Kuru Kuru, executed from 22 Oct. to 3 Nov. 2023, is a collaborative effort with the Regional Fisheries Surveillance Centre, aimed at countering Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing across the region.

The operation encompasses a wide array of objectives, including enhancing cooperative surveillance engagement between participating nations, conducting boarding activities at sea to combat IUU fishing, and utilizing remote sensing

information to drive intelligence-led operations. This operation covers a combined area of 15 participating Pacific Island Country exclusive economic zones and the adjacent high seas pockets, approximating 8.2 million square miles, an area more than twice the size of the continental United States.

“The U.S. Coast Guard’s presence and contributions to Operation Kuru Kuru underscore our commitment to regional security and disaster response,” said Cmdr. Andrew Williams, enforcement branch chief for U.S. Coast Guard District 14. “We are honored to stand alongside our international partners as we work together to address challenges that impact the Pacific region.”

While engaged in the region, the Coast Guard offers a host of mission capabilities, including proactively supporting search and rescue operations, humanitarian aid, and air and vessel surveillance to counter illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing across the region.

During this operation, a Coast Guard C-130 based out of Coast Guard District 14’s Air Station Barbers Point, responded to a request from the Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre Fiji to perform search and rescue operations in and around the Nonouti Island, Gilbert Islands, Kiribati. The C-130 was then rerouted following Tropical Cyclone Lola’s impact on Vanuatu to conduct post-storm assessments throughout the South Pacific island chain surrounding Vanuatu. These assessments were integral in gauging the extent of damage caused by the cyclone and facilitating the coordination of relief efforts.

Despite the operational challenges posed by Tropical Cyclone Lola, the C-130 was able to conduct aerial surveillance fishery patrols within the EEZs of Fiji, Tonga, American Samoa, and Vanuatu, providing several crucial observation reports to partner nations.

“Operation Kuru Kuru highlights the Coast Guard’s partnership

with Pacific Island nations and how these collaborative efforts are vital in our mission to combat Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing.” said Rear Adm. Michael Day, commander of U.S. Coast Guard District 14. “Together, we can protect our oceans, preserve marine resources, and ensure sustainable fisheries for future generations while addressing additional challenges that impact the Pacific region.”

Through operations like Operation Kuru Kuru, the Coast Guard remains dedicated to serving and safeguarding the international community, addressing IUU fishing, and responding to humanitarian crises. It reinforces the importance of multilateral cooperation and regional security to protect the resources and well-being of Pacific nations.

The Coast Guard is responsible for ensuring the safety, security, and environmental protection of the Pacific region. Its core missions encompass search and rescue, law enforcement, fisheries protection, and humanitarian assistance across a vast and diverse area of operations.

U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Escanaba returns home to Portsmouth, Virginia, after interdicting \$102 million worth of illegal narcotics



[Release from Coast Guard Atlantic Area](#)

Nov. 20, 2023

PORTSMOUTH, Va.— The crew of the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Escanaba returned home to Portsmouth, Monday, following a 51-day patrol in the Eastern Pacific Ocean.

Patrolling in support of Joint Interagency Task Force-South, Escanaba worked alongside other Coast Guard cutters, Department of Defense and Department of Homeland Security units, and several international partners to conduct counterdrug operations.

Escanaba's crew disrupted illegal narcotics smuggling, interdicting 3,520 kilograms of cocaine valued at more than \$102 million, which were offloaded in Port Everglades, Florida. While in theater, Escanaba worked to detect and interdict drug-smuggling vessels and suspected traffickers. Escanaba's crew directly contributed to Coast Guard objectives

to combat transnational criminal organizations and enhance regional stability and security.

Escanaba's operations were augmented by a Coast Guard Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron crew, which delivered air support for the use of force, and a tactical law enforcement detachment, which supplied skilled boarding personnel for mission strategy and strengthened law enforcement activities.

"The Escanaba hasn't patrolled the Eastern Pacific for nearly a year, so this is the first counterdrug experience for many in the crew," said Cmdr. Jared Silverman, the commanding officer of Escanaba. "I am beyond impressed with their ability to perform in less-than-ideal weather and circumstances. Beyond our operational success, the crew was able to build life-long bonds through once-in-a-lifetime experiences like transiting through the Panama Canal, to having fish calls in the Eastern Pacific. I'm glad that we could make these memories while accomplishing the mission as a unified crew."

Escanaba is a 270-foot, Famous-class medium endurance cutter. The cutter's primary missions are counterdrug 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](#).

National Security Cutter Calhoun (WMSL 759) Sails Away from HII's Ingalls Shipbuilding



[Release from HII](#)

PASCAGOULA, Miss., Nov. 21, 2023 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) – The U.S. Coast Guard's newest *Legend*-class national security cutter, *Calhoun* (WMSL 759), departed from HII's (NYSE: HII) Ingalls Shipbuilding division on Sunday, Nov. 19.

"We congratulate the NSC team of shipbuilders on a job well done," said Ingalls Shipbuilding NSC Program Manager Amanda Whitaker. "Watching *Calhoun* sail away is a proud moment for us all and we look forward to watching this highly capable national security cutter serve for decades to come."

Calhoun is scheduled for commissioning in 2024 and will be

homeported in Charleston, S.C., joining cutters *Hamilton*, *James* and *Stone*.

Ingalls has delivered 10 *Legend*-class national security cutters to the Coast Guard, including *Calhoun* and is continuing construction on the final ship in the class, *Friedman* (WMSL 760).

A photo accompanying this release is available at: <https://hii.com/news/national-security-cutter-calhoun-wmsl-759-sails-away-from-hiis-ingalls-shipbuilding/>

For over two decades, Ingalls Shipbuilding has designed and built the Coast Guard's *Legend*-class national security cutters. These ships are capable of embarking and supporting a wide range of Coast Guard, Navy and NATO missions. National security cutters have proven to be ideal platforms for drug interdiction, global illegal fishing, disaster relief and defense support operations.

NSC 10 is named to honor Charles L. Calhoun, the first Master Chief Petty Officer of the U.S. Coast Guard. Calhoun served in the U.S. Navy for three years during World War II and was honorably discharged in 1946 as a torpedoman's mate petty officer 2nd class. He enlisted in the Coast Guard that same year and held varying positions of leadership over the course of his career.

**Combined Maritime Forces,
U.S. Coast Guard Make \$21**

Million Drug Seizure in the Gulf of Oman



GULF OF OMAN (Nov. 14, 2023) Illegal narcotics seized from a stateless vessel are stacked on the deck of the U.S. Coast Guard Sentinel-class fast response cutter USCGC Emlen Tunnell (WPC 1145) in the Gulf of Oman, Nov. 14. Emlen Tunnell was operating under Combined Task Force 150, one of five task forces under Combined Maritime Forces, the largest multinational naval partnership in the world. CTF 150 focuses on maritime security operations in the Gulf of Oman, Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean. **(Photo by U.S. Coast Guard courtesy photo)**

[Release from By U.S. Naval Forces Central Command Public Affairs](#)

MANAMA, Bahrain – A U.S. Coast Guard cutter crew seized about \$21 million worth of illegal drugs from a stateless vessel while operating in the international waters of the Gulf of Oman, Nov. 14.

Coast Guardsmen from the Sentinel-class fast response cutter USCGC Emlen Tunnell (WPC 1145), working under the command of Combined Maritime Forces' Combined Task Force (CTF) 150, seized 2,000 kilograms of hashish and 384 kilograms of methamphetamine from the vessel during an interdiction operation.

“This new seizure shows once again the operational effectiveness of Combined Maritime Forces assets and nations,” said French navy Capt. Yannick Bossu, CTF 150 commander. “It illustrates that nations from all around the world are committed to regional maritime security in the Indian Ocean alongside their regional partners.”

This event marks the fifth time in recent months the French-led CTF 150 has interdicted illicit narcotics at sea. In those previous operations, CTF ships seized more than 4,522 kilograms of methamphetamine, heroin, and hashish from stateless vessels during interdiction operations, with a street value of more than \$94 million.

CTF 150 is one of five task forces under Combined Maritime Forces, the largest multinational naval partnership in the world. CTF 150 focuses on maritime security operations in the Gulf of Oman, Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean.

Since 2021, Combined Maritime Forces has seized more than \$1 billion in illegal drugs while patrolling waters across the Middle East.

The 38-nation naval partnership upholds the international rules-based order by promoting security and stability across 3.2 million square miles of water encompassing some of the world's most important shipping lanes.

USCGC Myrtle Hazard completes successful patrol emphasizing community commitment in CNMI



[Release from U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam](#)

Nov. 15, 2023

SANTA RITA, Guam – The USCGC Myrtle Hazard (WPC 1139) crew successfully completed a multifaceted patrol from Oct. 16 to Nov. 5, 2023, underscoring the Service’s unwavering commitment to the community and partners in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI).

During this period, the cutter’s crew achieved several key

objectives, including the delivery of vital donations and supplies, and facilitating critical wellness checks in the wake of Typhoon Bolaven.

Lt. Jalle Merritt, commanding officer of the Myrtle Hazard, expressed pride in her crew's accomplishments, stating, "The value and impact of our efforts in the CNMI are a testament to the dedication and skill of our personnel. We are honored to serve these communities and contribute positively to their resilience and well-being."

Community Support and Disaster Response

In a joint effort with Guam Animals in Need (GAIN), the Myrtle Hazard team ensured the timely delivery of 500 lbs. of dog food to support animal rescue initiatives in Rota and Tinian. This gesture highlights the U.S. Coast Guard's broader commitment to supporting local communities and non-governmental partners. In addition, they delivered supplies to the U.S. Marine Corps in Tinian.

Moreover, the cutter crew played a pivotal role in transporting the CNMI Northern Islands Mayor, Val Taisakan, enabling essential post-storm wellness checks and the distribution of necessary supplies to Agrihan and Pagan residents. This timely intervention, following Typhoon Bolaven, was critical in assessing and addressing the immediate needs of the island communities.

Capt. Nick Simmons, commander of U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam, emphasized the humanitarian nature of the U.S. Coast Guard's mission. "Our service to the community goes beyond maritime safety and security. It's about building strong relationships and being there for our partners, especially in times of need."

Training and Maintenance Achievements

Alongside these community-focused initiatives, Myrtle Hazard personnel diligently conducted shipboard training, encompassing navigation and damage control drills. This training ensures the crew's preparedness for a wide range of maritime operations and emergencies. The cutter's engineering team also successfully completed repairs to four maintenance and casualty items, reinforcing operational readiness.

The Myrtle Hazard's most recent patrol reflects the U.S. Coast Guard's enduring commitment to serving and protecting the communities within its area of responsibility. The successful completion of this patrol not only demonstrates operational excellence but also reinforces the humanitarian values at the core of the U.S. Coast Guard's mission.

About the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Myrtle Hazard

The USCGC Myrtle Hazard is a 154-foot Sentinel-class cutter homeported in Guam. It plays a vital role in maritime law enforcement, search and rescue, and homeland security operations in the region.

U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Polar Star departs Seattle to begin Operation Deep Freeze in Antarctica



[Release from Coast Guard Pacific Area](#)

16 November 2023

SEATTLE – The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Polar Star (WAGB 10) and crew departed Seattle, Wednesday, and are scheduled to transit to Antarctica in support of Operation Deep Freeze.

Operation Deep Freeze (ODF) is an annual joint military mission to resupply the United States Antarctic stations in support of the National Science Foundation (NSF), the lead agency for the United States Antarctic Program (USAP). This marks the 27th year for the Polar Star to render support.

Each year, the Polar Star crew breaks a navigable channel through ice, allowing fuel and supply ships to reach McMurdo Station, which is the largest Antarctic station and the logistics hub of the USAP.

“Operation Deep Freeze is a unique and important mission that

Coast Guard Cutter Polar Star undertakes each year," said Capt. Keith Ropella, Polar Star's commanding officer. "This mission requires year-round effort from the crew to prepare this 47-year-old cutter for the 20,000 nautical mile round trip and extreme environmental conditions we will face. We have an incredible and dedicated team; I couldn't be more excited or more proud to make this journey with them."

The U.S. Coast Guard is recapitalizing its polar icebreaker fleet to ensure continued access to the polar regions and to protect the country's economic, environmental, and national security interests. Each year, the crew is asked to put forth an immense amount of time and effort to prepare the cutter for their annual deployment in support of ODF. The Polar Star completed the third of five planned phases of the service life extension project (SLEP), costing \$15.6 million over a 132-day maintenance period.

"The U.S. Coast Guard is pleased to continue partnering with the National Science Foundation and the U.S. Antarctic Program to enable a durable U.S. presence on Antarctica and across the Southern Ocean," said Vice Adm. Andrew Tiongson, Pacific Area commander. "Our commitment to the Antarctic region is unwavering, and we have been pleased to increase our maritime cooperation with like-minded members of the Antarctic Treaty, as well as investing in new technologies and vessels to ensure our presence is enduring."

Joint Task Force-Support Forces Antarctica, provides Department of Defense support to the NSF and the USAP through ODF. Every year, a joint and total force team works together to complete a successful ODF season. Active, Guard, Reserve service members from the U.S. Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, and Navy work together to forge a strong JTF-SFA that continues the proud tradition of U.S. military support to the USAP. The U.S. Coast Guard provides direct logistical support to the NSF and maintains a regional presence that preserves Antarctica as a scientific refuge.

BOLLINGER SHIPYARDS DELIVERS 6TH AND FINAL BOSTON-BOUND FAST RESPONSE CUTTER TO U.S. COAST GUARD



Release from Bollinger Shipyards

USCGC Melvin Bell is the sixth of six FRCs to be homeported in Boston, MA

LOCKPORT, La., – (November 16, 2023) – Bollinger Shipyards LLC

("Bollinger") today announced it has delivered the USCGC Melvin Bell to the U.S. Coast Guard in Key West, Florida. This is the 181st vessel Bollinger has delivered to the U.S. Coast Guard over a 35-year period and the 55th [Fast Response Cutter](#) ("FRC") delivered under the current program.

"We're incredibly proud to deliver the USCGC Melvin Bell, the final of six Fast Response Cutters to be homeported in Boston, the birthplace of the U.S. Coast Guard," said Bollinger President & C.E.O. Ben Bordelon. "We're confident that pound for pound, the quality and capabilities of the FRC platform are unmatched and that this vessel will outperform its mission requirements and expectations in the challenging conditions where it will operate in the North Atlantic. Our unique experience building for the Coast Guard is unparalleled and has shown time and time again that we successfully deliver the highest quality vessels on a reliable, aggressive production schedule. We look forward to continuing our historic partnership with the U.S. Coast Guard."

The USCGC Melvin Bell will be the sixth of six FRCs to be homeported in Sector Boston, which is known as "The Birthplace of the Coast Guard." The sector is responsible for coastal safety, security, and environmental protection from the New Hampshire-Massachusetts border southward to Plymouth, Massachusetts out to 200nm offshore. Sector Boston directs over 1,500 Active Duty, Reserve, and Auxiliary members whose mission is to protect and secure vital infrastructure, rescue mariners in peril at sea, enforce federal law, maintain navigable waterways, and respond to all hazards impacting the maritime transportation system and coastal region.

The Coast Guard's FY2024 Unfunded Priorities List includes procuring four more FRCs (which would be the 66th through 69th vessels in the program) to provide increased Coast Guard presence and engagement with allied and partner countries in the Indo-Pacific region. Earlier this year, Adm. Linda Fagan,

the commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard, said, "The Indo-Pacific is clearly a consequential region for America's future. The United States Indo-Pacific Strategy identifies an expanded role for the U.S. Coast Guard as a top Administration priority as we seek to ensure a region that is free and open. The U.S. Coast Guard will continue its long history of operational presence in the region with additional cutter patrols and deployable specialized forces."

Each FRC is named for an enlisted Coast Guard hero who distinguished themselves in the line of duty. Bell, a minority pioneer and Pacific war hero was a patriot whose distinguished career in service of his country spanned 65 years in military and civil service. During his active-duty career, Bell held many distinctions. In 1943 he became the first Pacific Islander advanced to chief petty officer. He later held the distinction of a dual rating as Chief Radioman and Chief Electronics Technician. In 1958 he became the first minority Master Chief in the history of the Coast Guard.

His decorations included the Coast Guard Good Conduct Medal (five awards), Navy Commendation Medal, Navy Unit Commendation, National Defense Service Medal, Asiatic Pacific Campaign Medal, American Defense Medal, American Campaign Medal and Victory World War II Medal.

ABOUT THE FAST RESPONSE CUTTER PLATFORM

The FRC is an operational "game changer," according to senior Coast Guard officials. FRCs are consistently being deployed in support of the full range of missions within the United States Coast Guard and other branches of our Armed Services due to its exceptional performance, expanded operational reach and capabilities, and ability to transform and adapt to the mission. FRCs have conducted operations as far as the Marshall Islands—a 4,400 nautical mile trip from their homeport. Measuring in at 154 feet, FRCs have a flank speed of 28 knots, state of the art C4ISR suite (Command, Control,

Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance), and stern launch and recovery ramp for a 26-foot, over-the-horizon interceptor cutter boat.

Coast Guard to Lay Up Some Cutters, Boats in Face of Recruit Shortfall



By
Richard
R. Burg
esses,
Senior
Editor

The Reliance-class medium-endurance cutter Reliance, shown here in 2022, will be decommissioned and three sister cutters will be laid up, pending decommissioning. *U.S. Coast Guard*

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ARINGTON, Va.—The U.S. Coast Guard will lay up several cutters

and patrol boats because of a service-wide manning shortage, moves that will reduce the Coast Guard's capacity for operations in the near term as the service grapples with the shortage of personnel.

The Coast Guard is short of some 3,000 personnel because in large part of shortfalls in recruiting in fiscal 2024.

"The Coast Guard is short nearly 10% of the entire enlisted workforce and cannot continue to operate as we have historically with fewer people," wrote AJ Pulkkinen in the October 31 announcement posted on the Coast Guard website. "To mitigate the workforce challenge risk in a deliberative and strategic fashion, the Vice Commandant, Adm. Steven Poulin, has provided specific temporary operational guidance to adapt our operations while prioritizing lifesaving missions, national security and protection of the marine transportation system."

"The Coast Guard cannot maintain the same level of operations with our current shortfall – we cannot do the same with less. Conducting our missions is often inherently dangerous, and doing so without enough crew puts our members and the American public at increased risk," wrote Commandant Adm. Linda Fagan and Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard Heath Jones.

"There will be no loss of search and rescue (SAR) capabilities," the announcement said. "However, we will temporarily adjust operations to prioritize our lifesaving missions, national security, and protection of the Marine transportation System. "

"As cutter crews are not scalable, the only way to reduce the workforce of the cutter fleet is to reduce the number of operating cutters," the announcement said. "Previously planned cutter decommissionings will continue, including the [Reliance-class] Coast Guard Cutter Steadfast [WMEC 623]. Some

cutters will be placed in a special status awaiting either decommissioning or future reactivation. In some cases, the crews will do a hull swap to lay up the cutter with the largest pending maintenance requirement.

The cutters and patrol boats affected include:

- Three 210-foot Reliance-class medium-endurance cutters (WMECs) will be placed in layup, pending decommissioning.
- Seven 87-foot Marine Protector-class patrol boats (WPBs) will be placed in layup, pending reactivation.
- Five 65-foot harbor tugs (WYTLs) will temporarily not be continuously manned but will be kept in a ready status in case icebreaking is needed.

- Two 154-foot Sentinel-class fast response cutters (WPCs) will commence uncrewed Recurring Depot Availability Program (RDAP) at the Coast Guard Yard in Baltimore, Maryland. The next 154-foot WPC scheduled for RDAP will deliver the hull to the Coast Guard Yard and swap hulls with a cutter that has completed drydock.

The cutbacks will affect 44 shore stations and 36 aids-to-navigation teams (ANTs) as well, which have more personnel than the prescribed staffing standards.

“The stations will be reduced to their staffing standards and the ANTs to one billet below their staffing standards,” the announcement said.

Other shoreside changes include, but are not limited to:

- Crews at all 23 seasonal station smalls will transfer to their parent command.
- The six non-response units (boat forces units without

SAR responsibilities) will suspend operations and their crews will be reassigned in assignment year (AY) 2024.

- The identified 19 stations whose SAR response capabilities are redundant will be deemed Scheduled Mission Units. Three of these 19 stations will be ports, waterways, and coastal security (PWCS) level one-Scheduled Mission Units.”

“The ‘Trackline to 10,000,’ to have ten thousand members assigned to afloat units, is still the goal for our future fleet and we will get there,” said Capt. John Driscoll, the Chief of the Office of Cutter Forces, in the release. “We need to adjust our operating capacity now so we can prepare for the future. We will gradually grow fleet capacity back through continued construction of ships with the latest technology and the best crew habitability. Our cutter fleet is in demand globally, and I can see our cuttermen continuing to explore new locations as our ship operations are dedicated to the highest priority missions.

“The Coast Guard has always answered the call when faced with incredible challenges,” Driscoll said. “We will take this challenge head-on and use it as an opportunity to prepare for the future.”