

# Coast Guard Cutter Dauntless returns home to Florida after interdicting 19.4 million in illegal narcotics, 3 suspected drug smugglers



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

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Dec. 13, 2023

PENSACOLA, Fla. – The crew of the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Dauntless (WMEC 624) returned to their homeport in Pensacola Tuesday following a 25-day counterdrug deployment in the Caribbean Sea.

While underway in the Coast Guard Seventh District's area of operations and in support of Joint Interagency Task Force-South, Dauntless's crew spent 25 days patrolling the Caribbean, where their primary mission was detecting and interdicting go-fast and other vessels suspected of smuggling illegal narcotics into the U.S.

During the patrol, Dauntless's crew interdicted one go-fast vessel smuggling illegal narcotics, seizing over 670 kilograms of cocaine worth an estimated 19.4 million, and apprehended three suspected drug smugglers.

"This interdiction truly showcased the impressive skill and relentless perseverance of the Dauntless crew," said Cmdr. Aaron Kowalczyk, commanding officer of Dauntless. "Their ability to complete the seizure despite challenging conditions highlights the Coast Guard's important role in countering transnational criminal organizations. The crew's commitment to combating narcotics trafficking is emblematic of their dedication to service."

In addition to interdicting illegal narcotics, Dauntless's crew conducted joint operations with the USS Farragut and its embarked Law Enforcement Detachment to transfer 433 kilograms of illegal narcotics and six suspected traffickers, strengthening interoperability with Department of Defense partners and promoting maritime security and safety.

Dauntless is a 210-foot Reliance-class medium endurance cutter. The cutter's primary missions are counter-narcotics operations, migrant interdiction, living marine resources protection, and search and rescue in support of U.S. Coast Guard operations throughout the Western Hemisphere.

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

at [www.uscga.edu](http://www.uscga.edu).

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# **Coast Guard Upgrades Two Detachments to Full Bases**

By Richard R. Burgess, Senior Editor

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Coast Guard has upgraded two of its land-based detachments stations to full bases, according to two Coast Guard directives.

The Coast Guard's Operational Logistics Command formally established Base St. Louis, Missouri, in ceremonies held Nov. 30, with Lieutenant Commander John Waters in command, and established Base Borinquen, Puerto Rico, on Dec. 12, with Lieutenant Commander Thomas Kai in command.

The directives noted that each base "provides a new junior command opportunity for the mission support enterprise."

Base St. Louis will provide support to Coast Guard operations in the Western Rivers and heartland of the United States. Base Borinquen will provide support to Coast Guard operations in the Caribbean Sea and Atlantic Ocean.

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## **U.S. Coast Guard Cutter**

# Waesche returns home after 89-day counternarcotics patrol in Eastern Pacific Ocean



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

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Dec. 10, 2023

ALAMEDA, Calif. – Coast Guard Cutter Waesche (WMSL 751) and crew returned to homeport, Saturday, following an 89-day counternarcotics patrol in the Eastern Pacific Ocean.

The 418-foot national security cutter and its crew patrolled more than 19,750 nautical miles conducting law enforcement and search and rescue operations in international waters off



Central and South America.

Waesche deployed with a Jacksonville, Florida, based Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron (HITRON) MH-65 Dolphin helicopter and aircrew, members from Law Enforcement Detachment (LEDET) 101 and 102, and contractors who flew Scan Eagle, an advanced unmanned aircraft system. While conducting flight operations with Air Station San Diego off the coast of San Diego, Waesche's crew received notification from of a mariner 300 nautical miles west of San Diego aboard a disabled sailing vessel with no food in 8-10 foot seas. Waesche diverted from its position to the disabled sailing vessel and launched its Over-The-Horizon (OTH) small boat crew to rescue the survivor and bring him aboard.

Waesche participated in San Francisco Fleet Week 2023, hosting several days of public tours and representing the service during the Parade of Ships event, which involved formation maneuvering with U.S. Navy vessels and rendering honors to the Secretary of the Navy in a pass-in-review.

After departing San Francisco, Waesche began its counternarcotics patrol in the Eastern Pacific, and interdicted five smuggling vessels operating in international waters, deploying the cutter's Over-the-Horizon (OTH) small boats with boarding teams, the Scan Eagle drone, and a helicopter with a precision marksman. Waesche's last interdiction was a self-propelled semi-submersible, resulting in the seizure of 2,510 kgs of cocaine. [Waesche's crew offloaded more than 18,000 pounds of cocaine in San Diego, Wednesday](#), which included two seizures of drug-smuggling vessels made by U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Active's crew.

Waesche is the second Legend-class cutter of the U.S. Coast Guard and is homeported at Coast Guard Island in Alameda, CA. Waesche is 418-feet long with a top speed of 28 knots and a range of 12,000 nautical miles. It is equipped with a flight

deck and hangars capable of housing two multi-mission helicopters and is outfitted with the most advanced command, control, and communications equipment.

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## **MULTIMEDIA RELEASE: Coast Guard crew offloads more than \$239 million worth of cocaine in San Diego**



[Release from U.S. Coast Guard District 11](#)

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Dec. 6, 2023

SAN DIEGO – The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Waesche (WMSL 751) offloads approximately 18,219 pounds of cocaine, with an estimated street value of more than \$239 million, on Wednesday in San Diego.

The offload is a result of six separate suspected drug smuggling vessel interdictions or events off the coasts of Mexico and Central and South America by the Coast Guard Cutters Waesche and Active in November.

- USCGC Waesche – 1,550 kg (3,417 lbs) cocaine (Nov. 7)
- USCGC Waesche – 1,309 kg (2,886 lbs) cocaine (Nov. 15)
- USCGC Waesche – 1,140 kg (2,513 lbs) cocaine (Nov. 16)
- USCGC Waesche – 2,510 kg (5,534 lbs) cocaine (Nov. 20)
- USCGC Active – 1,735 kg (3,825 lbs) cocaine (Nov. 23)
- USCGC Active – 20 kg (44 lbs) cocaine (Nov. 24)

The biggest of the six interdictions was the most recent interdiction, occurring Nov. 20, which was an interdiction of a self-propelled semi-submersible (SPSS) carrying more than 5,500 pounds of cocaine. The interdiction of the SPSS was the first in the Eastern Pacific since 2020.

“All four of our interdictions on this patrol are crucial to the Coast Guard’s efforts to keep illicit drugs off the streets, but our last interdiction of a semi-submersible vessel was noteworthy since it was the first semi-submersible interdicted in the Eastern Pacific in over three years,” said Capt. Robert Mohr, commanding officer of the Waesche. “I am extremely impressed with the crew’s dedication throughout this dynamic patrol. They overcame multiple challenges with collective hard work, ingenuity, and positive attitudes to keep us in pursuit of these cartels and their dangerous drugs. A successful patrol like this one is rewarding and leads to

better retention and recruiting efforts because everybody feels a sense of accomplishment.”

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 counternarcotic 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 proud of the unity of effort displayed by U.S. Coast Guard members aboard the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Waesche and our partners who stopped these narcotics from entering our Nation through the maritime domain,” said Vice Adm. Andrew Tiongson, commander, U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Area. “Transnational Criminal Organizations threaten security, undermine human rights, erode governance, and result in public health crises throughout the world. The Coast Guard prides itself as a trusted partner, building and maintaining relationships throughout Central and South America that counter the flow of narcotics and save lives both in the United States and abroad.”

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



“The significance of keeping this much cocaine from reaching our shores and streets is, no doubt, life-changing. Without these 9 tons of cocaine on American streets, fewer people will have access to this toxic poison, and hundreds of millions of dollars will not make it into cartel coffers,” said U.S. Attorney Tara McGrath. “The crew of the Waesche and the entire U.S. Coast Guard is to be commended for protecting our nation from the devastation, violence, and addiction that cocaine brings to our communities.”

The Waesche is one of four Legend-class national security cutters homeported in Alameda, California. National security cutters 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 a large amount of narcotics traffic occurs. With robust command, control, communication, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance equipment, stern boat launch and aviation facilities, as well as long-endurance station keeping, the national security cutters are afloat operational-level headquarters for complex law enforcement and national security missions involving multiple Coast Guard and partner agency participation.

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## **Coast Guard to SLEP, Expand MH-60T Helicopter Fleet as Sikorsky Delivers First New**

# Airframe



Sikorsky delivered the first of 45 new airframes to the Coast Guard for the service-life extension of the service's MH-60T helicopter fleet.

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By Richard R. Burgess, Senior Editor

ARLINGTON, Va.—The U.S. Coast Guard has confirmed plans to expand its MH-60T Jayhawk helicopter fleet and make it the standard service-wide helicopter. The service life-extension of the current MH-60T fleet is being highlighted as Sikorsky, a Lockheed Martin company, delivers the first of 45 replacement MH-60T airframes to the Coast Guard.

Sikorsky on Nov. 30, 2023, delivered the first new “hull,” as the airframe is called, which consists of the nose, cabin, and aft transition structure, combined as a single assembly, Sikorsky said in a release. Upon delivery, the new hull will be used to rebuild an older MH-60T with new and updated components by the Coast Guard's Aviation Logistics Center (ALC) in Elizabeth City, North Carolina starting in December 2023.

The Coast Guard's MH-60T fleet, the first of which originally began service as an HH-60J in 1990, is approaching the end of its service life of 20,000 hours per aircraft, with a current average of 16,000 flight hours per aircraft.

During the SLEP of 45 MH-60Ts, "the Coast Guard ALC will remove all dynamic (moving) components, digital cockpit, mission systems, and engines, then rebuild each aircraft around an all-new airframe," Sikorsky said, noting that the company's Troy, Alabama, facility is the site of the hull manufacture.

Sikorsky President Paul Lemmo told reporters at a Nov. 30 teleconference that the new hulls would be identical to those in the HH-60Js delivered between 1990 and 1996, but also would receive an anti-corrosion sealant in the joints.

The Coast Guard awarded Sikorsky a \$374 million contract to deliver all 45 MH-60T airframes to the ALC at a rate of 12 per year through 2027. Full-rate production will begin with fabrication of the fourth hull. The MH-60Ts going through SLEP will retain their Coast Guard serial numbers.

Rear Adm. Michael Campbell, Coast Guard director of Acquisition Programs and program executive officer, also speaking at the teleconference, said that the Jayhawk fleet went through an earlier SLEP during which the airframe life was extended from 10,000 to 20,000 flight hours. He said that without the SLEP the MH-60T fleet would have to be grounded by 2028. With the current SLEP, the MH-60T fleet would serve into the late 2040s.

The first MH-60T with the new hull is expected to fly in June at the ALC.

The Jayhawks are put through overhaul every four years, with six in overhaul at any given time.

The Coast Guard currently operates 48 MH-60Ts, three of which

will not receive the new hulls under this program because they were re-built with ex-U.S. Navy SH-60F or HH-60H helicopters. Some of the 45 Jayhawks receiving the new hulls also are ex-U.S. Navy H-60s that were re-built as Jayhawks.

According to the Coast Guard, the H-60 Jayhawk medium range recovery helicopter fleet has saved more than 11,900 lives during more than 48,300 search and rescue missions since 1990, accumulating more than 730,430 flight hours,” Sikorsky said in the release.

Campbell said the Coast Guard plans to increase the size of its Jayhawk fleet because of the capabilities of its national security cutters and forthcoming offshore patrol cutters and polar security cutters to hangar H-60 helicopters. The rotors and tail rotor boom of the MH-60T can be manually folded, but the rotors of the Navy H-60s have the capability to be electrically folded. The Coast Guard plans to install the electrical fold capability beginning in 2024.

The Coast Guard also plans to replace its fleet of 98 MH-65 Dolphin helicopters with MH-60Ts.

“The Coast Guard is moving forward with plans to transition the service’s rotary wing fleet to a standardized, single-platform fleet of MH-60Ts,” said Loretta Haring, Office of Strategic Planning and Communication (CG-925) Acquisition Directorate, in an email to reporters. “The Service plans to operate 127 airframes nationwide and intends to source the additional MH-60T hulls (termed “fleet growth”) through a combination of both newly manufactured hulls and Navy conversion hulls. The number of each to be used has not yet been determined. The initial phase of fleet growth likely will be 36 hulls.”

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# U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Tahoma and crew return to homeport following 65-day patrol in the Florida Straits



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

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Dec. 5, 2023

NEWPORT, R.I. — The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Tahoma (WMEC 908) and crew returned to their homeport in Newport on Tuesday, after a 65-day patrol in the Florida Straits.

Tahoma deployed 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, Tahoma's crew conducted maritime safety and security missions while working with other Coast Guard cutters to detect, deter, and intercept unsafe and illegal maritime migration ventures bound for the United States.

During the patrol, Tahoma contributed to the care and repatriation of 82 migrants. Tahoma interdicted six vessels bound for the United States. Tahoma also responded to a search and rescue case, assisting a Cuban mariner who had become lost at sea.

"It was an honor to serve as Commander, Command Task Unit 44.7.9 in support of Operation Vigilant Sentry," said Cmdr. Piero Pecora, commanding officer of Tahoma. "The homeland security task force continues to provide cooperative capability to effectively integrate forces from across the spectrum of DHS, state, and local force providers towards the enduring mission of securing our Southern Maritime Border while safeguarding life at sea."

HSTF-SE serves as the Department of Homeland Security lead for operational and tactical planning, command, and control, and acts as a standing organization to interdict illegal maritime migration attempts with federal, state, and local partners. HSTF-SE continues enhanced enforcement efforts in support of OVS, the 2004 DHS plan to respond to irregular and unlawful mass maritime migration in the Caribbean Sea and the Florida Straits.

Tahoma 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](#).

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## Coast Guard Cutter Calhoun arrives to new homeport in Charleston



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

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Dec. 3, 2023

NORTH CHARLESTON, S.C. – The crew of the U.S. Coast Guard

Cutter Calhoun (WMSL 759) arrived at their homeport in North Charleston, Sunday, after delivery from Ingalls Shipbuilding and supporting missions throughout the Coast Guard's Seventh and Eighth districts.

The Coast Guard accepted the delivery of the 10th national security cutter (NSC) on Oct. 13, 2023, after the initial christening ceremony in Pascagoula, Mississippi, June 4, 2022.

Calhoun is the fourth Legend-class NSC to be homeported in North Charleston, joining Coast Guard Cutters Hamilton (WMSL 753), James (WMSL 754), and Stone (WMSL 758).

Calhoun's crew began deploying to Pascagoula in March 2023. Following an intense 37-day post-delivery period, Calhoun supported the Coast Guard's Eighth District in response to an oil discharge approximately 20 miles northeast of the mouth of the Mississippi River in the Gulf of Mexico. Calhoun remained on scene for 48 hours, providing key offshore command and control capability to the multi-agency response.

"Our crew members have more than earned their time back home," said Capt. Timothy Sommella, commanding officer of Calhoun. "Most of our crew has surged the past 18 months in support of other Coast Guard units to meet global commitments. The most recent deployment of over 120 days to the Gulf Coast for the cutter's delivery and acceptance was particularly challenging but tremendously satisfying. We finally sailed away as a crew for the first time with the same commitment to excellence and determination that the ship's namesake, the first Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard, Charles L. Calhoun, displayed during his distinguished Coast Guard career. We are incredibly thankful this time of year for the personal and professional support from our friends and loved ones who stood with us, and we will continue to forge those bonds, whether at sea or ashore."

During the remainder of Calhoun's first patrol, Calhoun provided a forward presence in support of Homeland Security Task Force-Southeast and Operation Vigilant Sentry within the Coast Guard Seventh District's area of responsibility to deter irregular migration and save lives in the South Florida Straits while testing its vital equipment, systems, and completing required training.

"It is a privilege to be a part of such an amazing team of professionals," said Senior Chief Petty Officer Aaron Deluca, Calhoun's command senior enlisted leader. "Having completed the challenges of acceptance, training, and sailing one of the most technologically advanced assets in the Coast Guard, I am excited to bring cutter Calhoun to its homeport and the community of Charleston."

Calhoun is named to honor the first Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard, Charles L. Calhoun, who was from Ocean City, Maryland. During Calhoun's tenure, he was responsible for improving and developing many of the Coast Guard's administrative and people-focused programs, resulting in better communications and retention efforts within the enlisted community.

Calhoun is the newest 418-foot, Legend-class cutter to join the Coast Guard fleet. 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 counterdrug operations, migrant interdiction, living marine resources, defense readiness, and command and control in support of U.S. Coast Guard operations worldwide and here at home.

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# U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Bear returns home following 56-day maritime safety and security patrol



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

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PORTSMOUTH, Va. – The crew of the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Bear (WMEC 901) returned to their homeport in Portsmouth, Friday, following a 56-day deployment in the Windward Pass and Central Caribbean.

Bear worked alongside other Coast Guard cutters, U.S. Navy



assets, 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. Bear's crew also supported Homeland Security Task Force – Southeast's Operation Vigilant Sentry and Joint Interagency Task Force South initiatives within the Coast Guard Seventh District's area of responsibility.

During the patrol, Bear interdicted an overloaded vessel suspected of migrants and escorted the vessel back to their point of origin, Haiti.

While moored in Cartagena, Colombia, the Bear's crew hosted a subject matter expert exchange with the Colombian Navy. Bear's crew cross-trained with Colombian Navy partners, sharing interdiction and counterdrug best practices. Bear also hosted an international group of flag officers and staff from Colombia, France, and the United States.

"I'm extremely proud of the Bear crew for their professionalism and fellowship working alongside our Colombia partners," said Cmdr. Brooke Millard, Bear's commanding officer. "The interoperability between U.S. and Colombia assets is a true force multiplier."

Of note, during this patrol, one of Bear's original 40-year-old Main Diesel Engines clocked [100,000 hours of service](#), a testament to Coast Guard engineering and maintenance.

Bear 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. 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.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](#).

Learn more about Operation Vigilant Sentry [here](#).

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**USCGC Frederick Hatch  
concludes historic patrol  
with engagements in the  
Philippines, fisheries  
enforcement in Republic of  
Palau, Papua New Guinea**



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

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SANTA RITA, Guam – The USCGC Frederick Hatch (WPC 1143) successfully concluded a routine 47-day expeditionary patrol covering more than 8,200 nautical miles under Operation Blue Pacific, returning to Guam on Thanksgiving, distinguished by a series of historic and strategic engagements across the Western Pacific and Oceania.

“USCGC Frederick Hatch’s highly successful patrol is a testament to the diligence and expertise of the crew onboard, always remaining positive and overcoming numerous challenges to continually set the standard for Coast Guard operations in the Pacific. Their efforts to keep our equipment functioning properly, go over the rail regularly for boardings, and cook meals in heavy seas is what makes the U.S. Coast Guard’s commitment to the Indo-Pacific region so strong. Our people

are the best at what they do and always ready to go above and beyond when asked, which is the basis for being a trusted partner and fostering strong international alliances,” said Lt. Patrick Dreiss, commanding officer of the Frederick Hatch.

#### Historic First Visit to Tacloban, Philippines

A highlight of the patrol was Frederick Hatch’s historic visit to Tacloban, Philippines, in mid-October, marking a significant milestone in U.S.-Philippines relations. The visit coincided with the 79th anniversary of the Battle of Leyte Gulf. In addition to the commemoration observance, the crew engaged in various activities, including a maritime law enforcement exchange supported by U.S. Coast Guard Maritime Security and Response Team West, community interactions, including a visit with the mayor, and cultural immersion.

#### Maritime Security and Fisheries Patrol

The second half of the patrol focused on countering illegal fishing and enhancing partnerships in the Republic of Palau and Papua New Guinea. While en route to Palau, the crew conducted critical observation reports highlighting potential threats to maritime governance and fishery management. These reports included observations of four Philippine-flagged fishing vessels at the boundary of Palau’s Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and the high seas, with one vessel within the Palauan EEZ when detected. Notably, these vessels needed permits to operate under the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) on the high seas or Palau EEZ, and their Philippine permits expired. Their presence and activities represent potential serious violations under the WCPFC regulations.

The following day, the crew reported two additional Philippine-flagged vessels fishing without permits in WCPFC-governed waters again near the Palau EEZ, adding to the count of serious violations. Following a port call in Palau on a

subsequent patrol of the Palau EEZ, the crew identified only one vessel actively fishing, recently boarded, and detected no further unauthorized incursions. In response to a request from the Palau Joint Operations Center, the crew also disposed of two fish aggregating devices found within the Palau EEZ, addressing concerns over illegal local fishing practices.

While en route to Papua New Guinea (PNG), Frederick Hatch's crew conducted one boarding on the high seas under WCPFC authority, reporting three potential violations. The crew then welcomed two PNG boarding officers, one from the Customs Services and one from the National Fisheries Authority, and together, they conducted nine additional PNG-led boardings within their EEZ under the bilateral maritime law enforcement agreement. These boardings undertaken in the eastern EEZ resulted in 16 issued violations and two warnings, addressing a range of issues such as exceeding crew occupancy limits based on available berthing, improper crew compositions due to a lack of required PNG crew expired seafarers' credentials, and poor vessel markings. The vessels' flags include the People's Republic of China, Vanuatu, and the Philippines.

"This proactive enforcement and monitoring underscore the importance of upholding good maritime governance and preserving sustainable fishing practices, critical for the ecological and economic health of the region," said Capt. Nick Simmons. "The relationships we're building in Oceania and the Western Pacific are crucial for our continued commitment to our allies. This patrol exemplifies our dedication to maintaining stability and security in these waters."

#### Engagement and Cooperation in Papua New Guinea

Frederick Hatch's visit to Papua New Guinea (PNG) exemplified increased bilateral defense and security cooperation, as highlighted by the recent signing and ratification of the Defense Cooperation Agreement. The crew's interactions with PNG fisheries, customs officers, and the local community



underscore the ongoing effort to strengthen regional relationships.

“This patrol was our crew’s first time working with PNG Customs and Fisheries, and we look forward to working with them again in the future. Thank you to our two shipriders, Mr. Roger Sivlanduo and Mr. Jeremy Nelson, both skilled professionals and great people to have onboard to enrich the relationship between our agencies. It was an important opportunity to learn from each other and develop new tactics to address the IUU-F threat throughout Melanesia in the future while also carrying out several very successful boardings counteracting those threats in the present,” said Dreiss.

#### Support from DOL-X Team

The U.S. Coast Guard’s newly created DOL-X team was pivotal in supporting the Frederick Hatch’s logistics, including repairs and maintenance, ensuring the cutter’s operational readiness throughout the patrol. The team met the cutter during two port calls, hand-carrying critical parts to address casualties and augmenting the cutter’s engineers to repair the issues.

#### About the U.S. Coast Guard in the Pacific Region:

The U.S. Coast Guard is vital to ensuring maritime safety, security, and stewardship across a vast Pacific expanse, spanning six continents, 71 countries, and 74 million square miles of ocean. U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Area leads coordination and integration efforts in this vast region, promoting collaboration with partners through the actions of the U.S. Coast Guard 14th District and U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam teams.

The Frederick Hatch is the 43rd 154-foot Sentinel-class fast response cutter named for a surfman and lighthouse keeper who was a two-time Gold Life Saving Medal recipient. They regularly patrol Oceania, fostering international cooperation and supporting maritime safety, security, and stewardship.

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# 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

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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."