

# I MEF Marines Evaluate Fiber-Optic FPV Drones During DIU Challenge



From [1st Lt. Logan Tompkins](#), Communication Strategy and Operations, I Marine Expeditionary Force

MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. – U.S. Marines with I Marine Expeditionary Force partnered with the Defense Innovation Unit and industry professionals, Jan. 27-29, 2026, to evaluate first-person view small unmanned aircraft systems that use fiber optic cables, marking the U.S. Marine Corps' first field evaluation of the technology for sUAS employment in contested environments.

The three-day assessment focused on “ready now” FPV drone solutions designed to maintain command-and-control and video feeds when radio-frequency links are degraded. Unlike

traditional unmanned aircraft systems that rely on wireless signals, fiber optic cables provide a physical data connection between the operator and the aircraft, reducing vulnerability to electronic warfare and enabling more reliable employment in denied environments.

The evaluation brought together Marines from 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion and 1st Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, with I MEF coordinating the event alongside DIU as part of Project G.I., a Department of War-wide effort intended to accelerate the fielding of solutions that address warfighter problem sets for the joint force. Participating vendors for the fiber-optic evaluation included Auterion, Kraken, ModalAI, Neros, and Nokturnal AI, with support from Contact Front Technologies.

“Fiber-optic tethered FPV capabilities are required on today’s battlefield,” said Col. Michael Carroll, assistant chief of staff, G-9, I Marine Expeditionary Force. “By deliberately building trained cadres within the command, I MEF is positioned to scale pilots and capability rapidly, and to responsibly leverage every opportunity to integrate, evaluate and familiarize warfighters with proven systems.”

During the event, Marines evaluated systems based on how quickly operators could transport, set up and employ the aircraft while wearing full combat equipment, as well as the durability of controllers, displays and supporting equipment. Marines also assessed how effectively each platform integrated with tactical command-and-control tools and how reliably the fiber optic cable performed during over-water control and data transmission. The over-water flights marked the U.S. Marine Corps’ first deliberate over-water evaluation of fiber-optic cable performance for FPV sUAS.

The event also served as a hands-on integration point for participating companies, allowing engineers to observe operator workflows and receive direct feedback on

usability, reliability and mission-driven requirements. Marines compiled observations and recommendations throughout the assessment to inform iterative improvements and future evaluations.

“The pace of change in robotics and autonomous systems is unlike anything we’ve seen before. Capabilities are evolving daily, not over years,” said Maj. Steven Atkinson, I MEF DIU mission partner. “In that environment, there will never be a single ‘silver bullet’ system, which is why the Blue UAS List must be continuously updated with a diverse set of best-of-breed platforms and components. Through our partnership with DIU, I MEF brings together Marines from multiple units, MOSs, and backgrounds to do exactly that, ensuring the systems added to the Blue List are not only policy-compliant, but operationally lethal, interoperable, and survivable in contested environments.”

Project G.I. launched in June 2025 with a prize funding pool to support live evaluations across multiple design reference missions. The project used an accelerated approach intended to move mature technology from proposal to hands-on testing in months rather than years. DIU designed the effort to involve operators early, stress systems against real operational constraints and rapidly iterate toward capabilities that can be integrated and scaled for units across the services.

I MEF has played a leading role in the challenge by organizing field-based evaluations, bringing together Marines with recent operational experience and ensuring feedback from end users is captured, translated into actionable requirements and pushed directly to industry teams. Last summer, Marines assigned to I MEF partnered with DIU and vendors during a larger Project G.I. evaluation at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, which combined familiarization training with scenario-based demonstrations and informed follow-on selection and development.

The January event built on that momentum by concentrating on fiber optic cable performance, a capability increasingly associated with maintaining drone effectiveness under electronic attack. Marines assessed how FPV systems connected by fiber optic cables could support tactical kinetic-effects while sustaining control and video in environments where traditional links can be disrupted.

“A fiber optic cable connected to an attack drone gives the ground force commander more options when it comes to precision fires in a GPS or communications-denied environment,” said 1st Lt. Kienan Morrissey, an intelligence officer with 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion who directly supported the evaluations. “Operator-to-vendor feedback is critical in this phase of the evaluation to ensure drone systems are mission capable, continuously improved and lethal in the hands of the end users.”

Insights from the evaluation will inform continued refinements as Project G.I. advances. As platforms complete compliance verification and cybersecurity review, selected systems are expected to move closer to procurement pathways and broader availability for DoW purchase and operation.

I MEF provides combatant commanders a globally responsive, expeditionary, and fully scalable Marine Air-Ground Task Force, capable of generating, deploying, and employing ready forces and formations for crisis response, forward presence, major combat operations, and campaigns.

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**Coast            Guard,            Homeland**

# Security Task Force Partners Seize and Offload \$13.3M in Cocaine



A suspected drug smuggling vessel is beached off Camuy, Puerto Rico, Feb. 13, 2026. Coast Guard law enforcement crews disrupted a drug trafficking go-fast vessel and seized 2,083 pounds of cocaine. (U.S. Coast Guard photo)

[From U.S. Coast Guard Sector San Juan Public Affairs](#)

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – The U.S. Coast Guard and partners with Homeland Security Task Force – San Juan Region, disrupted a drug trafficking go-fast vessel and seized 29 bales of cocaine in the Atlantic Ocean north of Puerto Rico, Friday.

The seized contraband weighed a combined 2,083 pounds worth an estimated \$13.3 million. No apprehensions were reported. Homeland Security Investigations is leading the investigation into the case.

During a routine patrol Friday night, the air crew of a Coast Guard HC-144 Ocean Sentry aircraft sighted a panga-style go-

fast vessel carrying multiple bales and fuel containers, approximately 100 nautical miles north of Camuy, Puerto Rico. Sector San Juan Command Center diverted Coast Guard Cutter Joseph Napier to interdict the suspect vessel and coordinated with Homeland Security Task Force – San Juan region partners, including Customs and Border Protection Caribbean Air and Marine Branch, Ramey Sector Border Patrol and Homeland Security Investigations.

As the cutter Joseph Napier approached, the suspected smugglers began evasive maneuvers before jettisoning their cargo overboard and fleeing. The crew of the Joseph Napier recovered 29 bales from the water, which later tested positive for cocaine. U.S. Border Patrol agents subsequently located the abandoned go-fast vessel ashore near Arecibo, Puerto Rico. The seized drugs were transferred to Homeland Security Investigations agents in San Juan.

“Fantastic work by the Joseph Napier, Air Station Borinquen and Air Station Miami crews for their efforts sighting and pursuing the suspect vessel and subsequently locating the 29 jettisoned bales of cocaine,” said Lt. John Groen, commanding officer of Joseph Napier. “If you are thinking about smuggling drugs to Puerto Rico, think again; the Coast Guard and our Homeland Security Task Force partners will use all available resources to find you and stop you.”

“This successful interdiction and seizure are a testament to the outstanding teamwork and coordination among the Homeland Security Task Force San Juan partners,” said Yariel Ramos, Acting Special Agent in Charge, Homeland Security Investigations San Juan. “Our joint efforts with the U.S. Coast Guard, Customs and Border Protection, and U.S. Border Patrol demonstrate our unwavering commitment to protecting our borders and disrupting the flow of illicit drugs into Puerto Rico and the United States. We will continue to leverage our combined resources and expertise to safeguard our communities

and hold criminal organizations accountable wherever they are.”

“Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands comprise the United States’ Caribbean border and serve as critical entry points into our country,” said Roberto Vaquero, CBP Director of Field Operations for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. “Our location places us on the front line of defense against maritime and aerial threats. CBP’s presence here is vital to protecting the United States’ Caribbean border. Through teamwork, technology, and dedication, we keep our communities safe and support a secure and prosperous future for all. This operation highlights the importance of our partnerships and our commitment to stopping drug smuggling and securing our borders.”

The Coast Guard is part of a whole-of-government approach to protect our maritime approaches in the Eastern Caribbean and secure our nation’s borders by interdicting drug smuggling activities at sea and dismantling foreign terrorist organizations and transnational criminal organizations, including narco-trafficking and human smuggling operations.

This counterdrug interdiction is part of the Homeland Security Task Force HSTF initiative established by Executive Order 14519. Protecting American People Against Invasion. The HSTF is a whole of government partnership dedicated to eliminating criminal cartels, foreign gangs, transnational criminal organizations, and human smuggling and trafficking rings operating in the United States and abroad. Through historic interagency collaboration the HSTF directs the full might of the United States law enforcement towards identifying, investigating, and prosecuting the full spectrum of crimes committed by these organizations, which have long fueled violence and instability within our borders. In performing this work, the HSTF places special emphasis on investigating and prosecuting those engaged in

child trafficking or other crimes involving children. The HSTF further utilizes all available tools to prosecute and remove the most violent criminal aliens from the United States. HSTF San Juan Region comprises agents and officers from Coast Guard Sector San Juan, the Coast Guard Investigative Service; the Drug Enforcement Administration Caribbean Division; the Federal Bureau of Investigation San Juan Field Office; United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement – Homeland Security Investigations; U.S. Customs and Border Protection’s Office of Field Operations, Air and Marine Operations Caribbean Branch, and U.S. Border Patrol Ramey Sector; the United States Marshals Service Districts of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands; the U.S. Postal Inspection Service Miami Division – San Juan Field Office; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives – Miami Field Division; the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area – Puerto Rico / Virgin Islands; the Transportation Security Administration – Federal Air Marshal; the Federal Aviation Administration, the Department of State Bureau of Diplomatic Security – RAC San Juan, the United States Secret Service and the United States Attorney’s Office for the District of Puerto Rico.

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## **Navy Issues RFP for Construction Manager to Accelerate Medium Landing Ship Acquisition**



WASHINGTON – The U.S. Navy has issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a Vessel Construction Manager (VCM) to oversee the acquisition of the new Medium Landing Ship (LSM). This strategy is designed to maximize commercial practices to

accelerate delivery, improve cost discipline, and expand the U.S. shipbuilding industrial base, with a contract award anticipated for mid-2026.

From Naval Sea Systems Command, Feb. 18, 2026

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Navy has issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a Vessel Construction Manager (VCM) to oversee the acquisition of the new Medium Landing Ship (LSM). This strategy is designed to maximize commercial practices to accelerate delivery, improve cost discipline, and expand the U.S. shipbuilding industrial base, with a contract award anticipated for mid-2026.

For initial production, the Navy will direct the VCM to manage LSM construction at two shipyards: Bollinger Shipyards and Fincantieri Marinette Marine. Bollinger Shipyards was awarded a contract to support LSM long lead time procurement and lead ship engineering design activities in September 2025; Fincantieri will execute LSM work to build four ships. The VCM will then have the ability to decide the best strategy for awarding the remaining three ships authorized under the base contract.

The VCM will hold the prime contract with the Navy and, in turn, issue and manage its own subcontracts directly with the shipyards. This places the VCM in direct contractual control of shipyard performance and creates a buffer that, along with a proven design, is expected to reduce cost and schedule risks.

“The VCM approach not only accelerates construction timelines but also strengthens our industrial base by engaging multiple shipyards,” said Rear Adm. Brian Metcalf, program executive officer, ships. “By providing a mature, ‘build-to-print’ design and empowering a VCM to manage production, we are streamlining oversight for this acquisition. This approach accelerates the timeline and strengthens our industrial base, ensuring we have the capacity and expertise needed for

sustained maritime advantage.”

This acquisition strategy is a key component of the Navy and Marine Corps’ effort to address readiness in the Indo-Pacific and reflects a change in how the Navy traditionally contracts and oversees ship construction. Leveraging this new approach, the VCM is responsible for managing the entire construction program, from the design phase through to vessel delivery and post-delivery support.

The VCM will manage production across multiple shipyards in parallel using proven commercial shipbuilding practices, with significantly fewer Navy personnel than a traditional shipbuilding program would require.

The Navy will provide a mature, “build-to-print” vessel design, significantly reducing technical and schedule risks. In December 2025, the Navy and Marine Corps jointly announced Damen Naval’s LST 100 – a proven, non-developmental design – would serve as the baseline to help rapidly field LSM capability.

The LSM will fill the capability gap between smaller, short-range landing craft and the Navy’s long-duration, multi-purpose amphibious warfare ships. It is essential for the maneuver and sustainment of Marine forces, providing the critical littoral mobility required in contested environments. The program will deliver a 35-ship fleet that enhances expeditionary agility and supports the Marine Corps’ concept of distributed maneuver and logistics.

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# NOAA Installs New PORTS Environmental Monitoring System in Boston Harbor



A container ship is docked at Massports Conley Container Terminal on Boston Harbor in 2024. (Image credit: Colleen Roche/NOAA Office of Coast Survey)

*New navigational system will improve safety in one of nation's busiest ports*

From Alison Gillespie, NOAA, Feb. 17, 2026

NOAA announced today the successful installation of a [Physical Oceanographic Real-Time System \(PORTS\)](#) in Boston Harbor. The system includes observational equipment at MassPort's Conley Terminal and on the Tobin Memorial Bridge.

The Boston Harbor PORTS, established in partnership with the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, is the 41st installation in a broad, public-private partnership program, providing commercial and other vessel operators with accurate and reliable real-time information about

environmental conditions to support safe navigation.

“Boston Harbor is a vital gateway for economic activity in the United States,” said Neil Jacobs, Ph.D., NOAA administrator. “I am proud of NOAA’s dedication to developing and deploying systems that ensure navigational safety and enable more efficient commerce through our nation’s ports and waterways.”

The Boston Harbor PORTS® will consist of one current meter and one meteorological station that will collect wind, air temperature and barometric pressure data. The new PORTS system is also slated to include the installation of a new air gap sensor at the Tobin Memorial Bridge over the Mystic River. The sensor will provide real-time data on the amount of bridge clearance that is available to ships in an area where the tides can shift dramatically throughout the day. [NOAA’s existing National Water Level Observation Network](#) station at Boston Harbor will also be included in this newly established PORTS.

PORTS benefits for New England’s marine commerce

Growing ship size and increasing maritime traffic continue to present potential risks to maritime commerce and the coastal environment. NOAA’s PORTS systems mitigate those risks by integrating real-time environmental data and meteorological parameters with forecasts and other geospatial information. These systems have a proven track record of helping prevent collisions and groundings in ports across the nation, including in busy Boston Harbor.

“Boston Harbor PORTS will help mariners safely navigate shipping routes and make better, more efficient schedules supporting the resilience of our nation’s supply chain,” said Nicole R. LeBoeuf, director of NOAA’s National Ocean Service. “Through this effort, we will help support economic prosperity in the region while reducing risks to life, property and the coastal environment.”

Boston has a rich maritime history, operating the nation's oldest port, first established in the 1600s. Today, it is Massachusetts' primary seaport, and the nation's third busiest cargo port, handling more than 2.3 million tons annually. Conley is the only full-service container terminal in New England, connecting the Northeast to key global markets and tourism opportunities. The port also supports more than 66,000 jobs and generates billions of dollars in annual revenue for New England.

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## **Coast Guard Cutter Mohawk Returns from 60-day Patrol After Escorting Oil Tankers**



From U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area, Feb. 17, 2026

KEY WEST, Fla. – The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Mohawk returned to their homeport in Key West, Saturday, after a 60-day patrol in the Caribbean Sea and Gulf of America, where crew members boarded and escorted two sanctioned oil tankers.

Operating in support of Operation Southern Spear, Mohawk's crew partnered with Department of War and Department of Homeland Security assets as well as additional Coast Guard units to board and escort the two sanctioned vessels, preventing the illicit trade of crude oil in violation of international sanctions.

"Our dedicated crews are the frontline of maritime security," said Cmdr. Taylor Kellogg, commanding officer of Mohawk. "Their vigilance and expertise were instrumental in the successful interdiction and escort of these tankers, preventing illicit oil from destabilizing the Western Hemisphere. This is a clear demonstration of the Coast Guard's commitment to enforcing international law and our vital role in the Joint Force. I'm proud of their selfless service and devotion to duty."

On Dec. 20, a Coast Guard tactical law enforcement team with DoW support intercepted and boarded the Panamanian-flagged motor tanker Centuries. Subsequently, Mohawk escorted Centuries during its transit from the Caribbean Sea to the Gulf of America, where the tanker moored for further disposition in coordination with the Centuries' flag state.

On Jan. 15, a Coast Guard tactical team with DoW support intercepted and seized the Venezuelan-linked, Aframax motor tanker Veronica, prompting Mohawk's crew to quickly transit back to the Caribbean Sea and provide escort duties. Following a boarding by a joint warfare

team, Mohawk escorted Veronica to a secure anchorage in the Caribbean Sea.

The back-to-back escorts totaled 17 days and covered a combined distance of 2,700 nautical miles.

Unique statutory authorities enable the Coast Guard to enforce international and domestic law in the maritime domain, deploying assets to conduct missions in U.S. waters and on the high seas. The Coast Guard's involvement in these maritime activities was conducted under Title 14, U.S. Code and in accordance with customary international law. The Coast Guard exercises these authorities to protect maritime safety, security and U.S. interests.

### **About the U.S. Coast Guard and Operation Southern Spear**

The U.S. Coast Guard's missions are enabled by a unique blend of military, law enforcement and humanitarian capabilities. The Coast Guard is the principal federal agency responsible for maritime safety, security and environmental stewardship in U.S. ports, waterways and on the high seas.

Operation Southern Spear is a multi-agency effort led by the DoW to counter illicit maritime trade and enforce international sanctions. By leveraging joint capabilities, the operation aims to disrupt transnational criminal organizations and maintain stability in the maritime domain.

Mohawk is a 270-foot, Famous-class medium endurance cutter homeported in Key West. An asset of U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area, the cutter's primary missions include counter-narcotics, alien interdiction, homeland security, and search and rescue in support of U.S. interests in the Western Hemisphere.

Based in Portsmouth, Virginia, U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area is responsible for all Coast Guard missions east of the Rocky Mountains to the Arabian Gulf, spanning five districts and 40 states. It oversees a wide range of operations,

including counter-drug and alien interdiction, enforcement of federal fishery laws, and search and rescue operations in support of Coast Guard missions throughout the Western Hemisphere. In addition to surge operations, Atlantic Area is a force provider of surface and air assets to the Caribbean and Eastern Pacific to combat transnational organized crime and illicit maritime activity.

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## **HII, Path Robotics Team to Integrate Physical AI Into Manned, Unmanned Shipbuilding**



Eric Chewning (Left), HII's EVP of Maritime Systems & Corporate Strategy, and Andy Lonsberry (right), CEO and co-founder, Path Robotics signed a memorandum of understanding to

explore the integration of Path's physical AI-based welding solutions into shipbuilding operations that could accelerate throughput, strengthen the maritime industrial base and augment the shipbuilding workforce. The signing ceremony took place at Path robotics' headquarters in Columbus Ohio. Photo credit: Path Robotics

COLUMBUS, Ohio – HII and Path Robotics signed a memorandum of understanding today to explore the integration of Path's physical AI for welding into shipbuilding operations that could accelerate throughput, strengthen the maritime industrial base, and augment the shipbuilding workforce. The MOU signing ceremony took place at Path Robotics' headquarters and was attended by Eric Chewning, HII's executive vice president of maritime systems and corporate strategy, and Andy Lonsberry, Path Robotics CEO and co-founder.

"We are excited to partner with Path Robotics to incorporate their state-of-the-art physical AI models to further augment our workforce and speed up U.S. Navy manned and unmanned shipbuilding production," said Chewning. "Our shipbuilding throughput was up 14% in 2025 and we are looking for an additional 15% increase in 2026. By working with new partners like Path Robotics, we can further accelerate shipbuilding production. I look forward to jointly developing an autonomous AI-based welding solution that can help us meet Navy standards and be scaled in our shipyard facilities. Navigating this transformational partnership has the potential to increase our throughput efficiency without sacrificing quality."

HII and Path Robotics will work to identify and potentially pursue future opportunities in three areas that include autonomous shipbuilding capability development, train a workforce to extend automation and establish an intellectual property framework for physical AI-based autonomous welding systems. In addition, the companies will pursue research and development around integrating Path's physical AI models with

other innovative shipbuilding technologies used in the construction of HII ships, to include HII's ROMULUS line of unmanned surface vehicles. Together these technologies would augment the welding workforce, automate structural production, and accelerate throughput to advance national security objectives.

"Partnering with the nation's largest military shipbuilder during such a critical time for national defense and manufacturing underscores the importance of what we're building at Path," said Lonsberry. "Welding is one of the hardest processes to automate in any industry, and shipbuilding is no exception. Path's physical AI is purpose-built for that challenge – seeing, understanding, and adapting to real world conditions in real time. We're honored to work alongside HII to help modernize defense manufacturing and strengthen the naval industrial base for decades to come."

Prior to the MOU signing ceremony, attendees from HII, local dignitaries and Path stakeholders walked the Path Robotics factory floor and observed robotic welding demonstrations in the company's new intelligence center. The demonstrations showcased how Path Robotics systems may be applicable to naval fabrication work, ranging from heavy foundations to large, complex ship structural assemblies. The technology showed how an autonomous welding system can adapt to unpredictable shipyard conditions, such as fit variations, complex joint types and different materials .

Path's physical AI model for welding, Obsidian, and proprietary sensing and vision system transforms a traditional industrial robot arm from a rigid, repeat-only machine into a real-time perception and decision-making system that can see, understand, and adapt to the variations of a shipbuilding environment.

Currently, HII shipbuilders perform specialized, high-tolerance welding and direct weld support activities on large,

complex ship structures without an AI-based autonomous welding capability. HII divisions use automated robot welders that require human collaboration – they are traditional panel line units, cobot welders that work alongside shipbuilders, or mechanized welders that follow pre-programmed paths. AI-driven autonomous welding technology presents a promising potential opportunity to expand distributed shipbuilding capacity and augment HII’s skilled workforce to accelerate delivery and meet the U.S. Navy’s growing demand.

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# American Defense Companies Strike High-Tech Gulf of America Security Partnership



Wraith USV (Photo from Janus)

From Janus Marine & Defense LLC

- Partnership between Janus Marine & Defense and Raven Defense can build 'wall of steel' around US oil and gas and shipping operations
- Companies will fuse latest electronic warfare and autonomous vessel and air technology
- Deploying new technology can free up US Navy ships, slashing costs, without compromising lethality or vigilance

Two leading American defense firms are striking a strategic agreement to build a high-tech 'wall of steel' to support the US Navy, commercial shipping and offshore operations in the Caribbean and Gulf of America.

The partnership sees South Carolina-headquartered marine autonomy specialist Janus Marine & Defense join forces with New Mexico-based US Department of War RF Systems contractor Raven Defense Corporation.

Janus CEO Jack Dougherty, a former U.S. Navy Iraq War veteran, said the aim of the partnership is to take pressure off the US Navy while protecting US oil and gas and shipping operations in the Gulf.

"The Gulf of America is seeing a massive increase in naval and commercial shipping and offshore activity," he said. "This demands the latest technology to protect assets and people. The Janus-Raven partnership will provide a wall of steel around operations. Key is to use technology to take the pressure off the US security forces in a contested, high-risk maritime environment. We can slash costs, without compromising lethality and vigilance, by deploying Janus experience with

autonomous surface and subsurface vessels combined with Raven's satellite communications, air drones, ISR, and electronic warfare expertise."

Jack said the 'wall of steel' will protect offshore energy infrastructure, ports, and critical maritime corridors, reducing reliance on, and risk to, manned vessels. He said Janus' expertise draws on over a decade of contracting experience leading and operating Unmanned Surface Vessels in defense and security operations, starting with the autonomous mine-hunting unit in 2014 in U.S. 5th Fleet.

Chris Patscheck, CEO of Raven Defense, which draws on decades of defense and electronic warfare experience, said the partnership is built on the latest maritime security needs – persistent, intelligent, and unmanned.

"We're proud to step up for America's interests in the Gulf with our friends at Janus," he said. "Our solution integrates persistent intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR), autonomous patrol, rapid interception, and remote operations center (ROC) support. It is purpose-built for the unique threat environment facing offshore energy operators. By leveraging unmanned water and air drones, advanced signal detection methods, and cybersecurity, our partnership offers continuous and pervasive coverage. We are setting a new standard for how energy infrastructure and shipping is protected."

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## **Coast Guard Offloads Over**

# \$133.5 Million in Illicit Drugs Interdicted in Eastern Pacific Ocean



The crew of USCGC Seneca (WMEC 906) stand for a photo during a drug offload at Port Everglades in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, Feb. 30, 2025. The crew offloaded more than 17,750 pounds of illicit narcotics worth more than \$133 million as a result of four interdictions in the international waters of the Eastern Pacific Ocean. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Eric Rodriguez)

[From Coast Guard Southeast District](#)

MIAMI – U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Seneca’s crew offloaded approximately 17,750 pounds of cocaine worth more than \$133.5 million in Port Everglades, Feb 13.

The seized contraband was the result of four interdictions

in international waters of the Eastern Pacific Ocean.

On Jan. 25, Seneca's crew detected a go-fast vessel, and the embarked Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron air crew employed airborne use of force tactics. Seneca's boarding team interdicted and boarded the vessel, seizing 4,410 pounds of cocaine.

On Jan. 31, Seneca's crew detected three go-fast vessels, and the embarked HITRON air crew employed airborne use of force tactics. Seneca's boarding team interdicted and boarded all three vessels, seizing 13,340 pounds of cocaine.

"I am extremely proud of the crew's incredible performance and adaptability during this deployment," said Capt. Lee Jones, commanding officer, Coast Guard Cutter Seneca. "This deployment demonstrates our enhanced posture and continued success in the fight against narco-terrorism and transnational criminal organizations. The Coast Guard, in conjunction with our inter-agency and international partners, continues to patrol areas commonly associated with drug trafficking in the Eastern Pacific, denying smugglers access to maritime routes by which they move illicit drugs to our U.S. land and sea borders."

The following assets and crews were involved in the interdiction operations:

- [Coast Guard Cutter Seneca](#)
- Coast Guard Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron
- [Joint Interagency Task Force-South](#)
- [Coast Guard Southeast District watchstanders](#)

- Coast Guard Southwest District watchstanders

80% of interdictions of U.S.-bound drugs occur at sea. This underscores the importance of maritime interdiction in combatting the flow of illegal narcotics and protecting American communities from this deadly threat. U.S. Southern Command's Joint Interagency Task Force-South based in Key West conducts the detection and monitoring of aerial and maritime transit of illegal drugs. Once interdiction becomes imminent, the law enforcement phase of the operation begins, and control of the operation shifts to the U.S. Coast Guard throughout the interdiction and apprehension. Interdictions in the Eastern Pacific Ocean are performed by members of the U.S. Coast Guard under the authority and control of the Coast Guard's Southwest District, headquartered in Alameda, California.

To protect the Homeland from ongoing trafficking of illicit narcotics from South America to the United States, the Coast Guard is accelerating our counter-drug operations in the Eastern Pacific Ocean in support of Operation Pacific Viper.

The Coast Guard continues increased operations to interdict, seize and disrupt transshipments of cocaine and other bulk illicit drugs by sea. These drugs fuel and enable cartels and transnational criminal organizations to produce and traffic illegal fentanyl, threatening the United States.

These interdictions deny criminal organizations illicit revenue. They provide critical testimonial and drug evidence as well as key intelligence for their total elimination. These interdictions relate to Homeland Security Taskforce Tampa, investigations in support of Operation Take Back America, which identifies, disrupts, and dismantles the highest-level criminal organizations that threaten the United States using a prosecutor-led, intelligence-driven, multi-agency approach.

Coast Guard Cutter Seneca is a 270-foot medium-endurance

cutter homeported in Portsmouth, Virginia, under U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area Command.

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# Coast Guard Commissions USCGC Frederick Mann in Kodiak, Alaska



The Coast Guard Cutter Frederick Mann (WPC 1160) displays signal flags after the cutter's commissioning ceremony at Coast Guard Base Kodiak, Alaska, Feb. 13, 2026. The commissioning solidified the Mann as the sixth fast response cutter to be homeported in Alaska, and it was presided over by Rear Adm. Bob Little, commander of the Coast Guard's Arctic District. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Cameron Snell)

## [From Coast Guard Arctic District Public Affairs](#)

KODIAK, Alaska – The Coast Guard commissioned its newest and sixth Arctic District Fast Response Cutter (FRC), Coast Guard Cutter Frederick Mann (WPC 1160), for official entry into its service fleet during a ceremony held in Kodiak, Friday, Feb. 13.

The ceremony was presided over by Rear Adm. Bob Little, commander of the Arctic District. Members of the Mann family were also in attendance, including the cutter's sponsor, Mrs. Eugenia "Jeannie" Mann Hyder, niece of Frederick Mann.

"Commissioning the Frederick Mann increases U.S. strength and ensures control of our maritime borders and approaches," said Little. "This crew will honor their motto – courage through fire—as they serve in the U.S. Arctic and Alaska."

The Mann is the Coast Guard's 60th FRC and the third to be homeported at Coast Guard Base Kodiak. The crew of the Mann will primarily serve in and around the Aleutian Islands, Bering Sea, Gulf of Alaska, and North Pacific Ocean. The cutter is designed for missions such as search and rescue; fishery patrols; drug and migrant interdiction; national defense; and ports, waterways, and coastal security.

Chief Warrant Officer Frederick Mann was born in Atlee, Virginia, Oct. 14, 1918, and enlisted in the Coast Guard in 1939.

During World War II, Mann's ship, the USS George F. Elliott, participated in the initial landings of Guadalcanal on Aug. 7, 1942. The following day, Japanese bombers attacked the landing fleet and a bomber aircraft crashed into his ship, spilling fuel across the decks and setting the ship on fire.

Mann carried a fire hose into the burning

ammunition compartment and pumped water into the space. Despite a lack of oxygen, suffocating smoke, and super-heated bulkheads, Mann re-entered the compartment to ensure the hose was dousing the fire and filling the compartment properly. His immediate actions prevented the space from detonating and causing more casualties aboard the Elliot.

As a direct result, the vessel continued to burn overnight without the ammunition detonating, and everyone was able to safely evacuate the vessel. For his heroic actions, Mann was awarded the Gold Life Saving Metal, and also received the Silver Star medal and the Presidential Unit Citation.

Afterward, Mann returned stateside and served a total of 31 years at a variety of units including captain-of-the-port (COPT) stations and lifeboat stations on the Great Lakes, East Coast, and Gulf Coast. He also served aboard the cutters Bibb and General Greene, buoy tenders Myrtle, Oak, White Pine, and finally Narcissus, which he commanded.

Mann met his wife, the former Winnie Knox, who served as a SPAR at COTP Miami at the same time as he did. Fred and Winnie retired to Bayview, Texas, near his last duty station at Port Isabel. They were married for 54 years.

Coast Guard veteran and war hero Chief Warrant Officer Frederick Dean Mann passed away at the age of 98 on Jan. 9, 2017.

The Coast Guard has ordered a series of new FRCs to replace the 1980s-era Island-class 110-foot patrol boats. Supported by historic investments made possible through President Trump's One Big Beautiful Bill Act, the legislation provides nearly \$25 billion – the largest single funding commitment in Coast Guard history – including \$1 billion dollars for additional FRCs. This commissioning follows the commissioning of USCGC Storis (WAGB 21) in August,

which is the Coast Guard's first polar ice breaker acquisition in over 25 years. The Arctic District is scheduled to acquire two new Offshore Patrol Cutters in the near future.

The FRCs feature advanced command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance equipment, and over-the-horizon cutter boat deployment, enhancing the Coast Guard's operations to control, secure, and defend the U.S. border and maritime approaches. These new assets and capabilities continue the Coast Guard's modernization through Force Design 2028, an initiative introduced by Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem to transform the Coast Guard into a more agile, capable and responsive fighting force.

The commissioning ceremony is a traditional milestone in the life of a cutter that marks its entry into active service and represents the cutter's readiness to conduct Coast Guard operations.

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## **Australia, Philippines, and U.S. Conduct a Multilateral Maritime Cooperative Activity**



From front, Philippine Coast Guard Teresa Magbanua-class patrol vessel BRP Teresa Magbanua (MRRV 9701), Royal Australian Navy Anzac-class frigate HMAS Toowoomba (FFH 156), U.S. Navy Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Dewey (DDG 105) and Philippine Navy Jose Miguel Malvar-class guided-missile frigate BRP Diego Silang (FFG 07) sail in formation during the Maritime Cooperative Activity (MCA) in the Philippines' Exclusive Economic Zone, Feb. 16, 2026. (U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Class Oscar Diaz)

[By U.S. 7th Fleet Public Affairs](#)

SOUTH CHINA SEA – The combined armed forces of Australia, the Philippines, and the United States, demonstrated a collective commitment to strengthen regional and international cooperation in support of a free and open Indo-Pacific while conducting a multilateral Maritime Cooperative Activity (MCA) within the Philippines' Exclusive Economic Zone, Feb. 15-16, 2026.

As the first multilateral MCA of 2026, this event built on previous MCAs and our continuous operations

together, which strengthen the interoperability of our armed and defense forces and their doctrines, tactics, techniques, and procedures. This MCA focused on conducting visual information drills and replenishment-at-sea.

MCAs are conducted in a manner consistent with international law and with due regard to the safety, navigational rights, and freedoms of all nations.

Participating units included Royal Australian Navy Anzac-class frigate HMAS Toowoomba (FFH 156), Royal Australian Air Force P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol and reconnaissance aircraft, Philippine Navy Jose Miguel Malvar-class guided missile frigate BRP Diego Silang (FFG 7), AW109 helicopter, Philippine Air Force's FA-50 fighter jets, A-29 Super Tucano, C-208B, a Sokol Search and Rescue helicopter, Philippine Coast Guard Teresa Magbanua-class patrol vessel BRP Teresa Magbanua (MRRV 9701), U.S. Navy Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Dewey (DDG 105), and a P-8A Poseidon assigned to Patrol Squadron (VP) 4.

The U.S., along with our allies and partners, upholds the right to freedom of navigation and overflight and other lawful uses of the sea and international airspace, and respect for all nations' maritime rights under international law.

U.S. 7th Fleet is the U.S. Navy's largest forward-deployed numbered fleet and routinely interacts and operates with allies and partners in preserving a free and open Indo-Pacific region.