

Four Days In, Hegseth, Caine Say U.S. Making Decisive Progress in Iran



March 4, 2026 | By Matthew Olay, DoW News

During the War Department's second press conference since the U.S. and Israel's launch of Operation Epic Fury against the Iranian regime Feb. 28, Secretary of War Pete Hegseth and Air Force Gen. Dan Caine, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, today said America is making decisive offensive progress in the conflict.

"I stand before you today with one unmistakable message about Operation Epic Fury: America is winning decisively, devastatingly and without mercy," Hegseth told the media from the Pentagon's press briefing room.

"We are only four days into this, and the results have been

incredible – historic, really. ... Only the United States could lead this [mission]. ... But, when you add the Israeli Defense Forces – a devastatingly capable force – the combination is sheer destruction for our radical Islamist Iranian adversaries,” Hegseth said.

During his remarks, Caine reiterated that the U.S. and Israel’s joint, three-pronged mission in the region is to target and eliminate Iran’s ballistic missile systems, destroy the Iranian navy and ensure Iran cannot rebuild or reconstitute its combat capability or power – including ensuring the country never obtains nuclear weapons.

In terms of battle damage, Caine said there has been an 86% overall drop in Iran’s ballistic missile launches since the first day of fighting, and a 23% decrease in just the last 24 hours. Additionally, he added there has been 73% decrease in Iranian one-way attack drone shots fired from early on in the conflict.

In terms of air power, Hegseth said that the U.S. and Israeli forces are poised to have complete control of Iranian air space within the next few days.

“I hope all the folks watching understand what ‘uncontested airspace’ and ‘complete control’ means: It means we will fly all day [and] all night ... finding, fixing and finishing the missiles and defense industrial base of the Iranian military; finding and fixing their leaders and their military leaders; flying over Tehran ... [with] Iranian leaders looking up and seeing only U.S. and Israeli air power every minute of every day, until we decide it’s over – and Iran will be able to do nothing about it,” Hegseth said.

At sea, U.S. Central Command announced yesterday that more than 20 Iranian navy vessels have been destroyed, including the sinking of an Iranian combatant ship in the Indian Ocean

by a U.S. Navy fast attack submarine.

It was the first time a U.S. submarine has used a Mark 48 torpedo to sink an enemy vessel since 1945, Caine noted.

“I want to remind everybody that this is an incredible demonstration of America’s global reach. To hunt, find and kill an out-of-area deployer is something that only the United States can do at this type of scale,” he said.

In discussing the Iranian regime’s predicament, Hegseth said he likens the situation to a football game, wherein Iran’s offense has already exhausted all of its scripted plays.

“But now that the game has started and the [U.S. and Israeli] defensive blitz is on, [Iran doesn’t] know what plays to call, let alone how to get in the huddle and call those plays,” Hegseth said.

He added, because so many of Iran’s senior leaders being killed on Operation Epic Fury’s first day, the military is unable to effectively communicate, let alone mount a coordinated and sustained offensive.

“This was never meant to be a fair fight, and it is not a fair fight. We are punching [the enemy] while they’re down, which is exactly how it should be,” Hegseth said, adding that Epic Fury has already unleashed twice the air power as the initial “shock and awe” phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003.

Looking ahead, Caine said that Centcom will continue to strike the regime’s infrastructure – including hunting and killing ballistic missile launchers and one-way attack capabilities – as well as continuing to attack Iran’s naval capabilities.

“We are just getting started,” Hegseth said.

Hegseth Says 'Epic Fury' Goals in Iran Are 'Laser-Focused'



March 2, 2026 | By C. Todd Lopez, DoW News

Since early morning Feb. 28, American forces in the U.S. Central Command area of operations have been involved in an intense bombing campaign against Iran that has already resulted in the death of Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

As part of Operation Epic Fury, which started at 1:15 a.m. EST, American forces have already targeted the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps command and control facilities,

Iranian air defense capabilities, missile and drone launch sites and military airfields.

Secretary of War Pete Hegseth said that while there is no timeline for the military operation, there are clearly defined goals for what the United States hopes to achieve.

“The mission of Operation Epic Fury is laser-focused,” Hegseth said today during a briefing at the Pentagon. “Destroy Iranian offensive missiles, destroy Iranian missile production, destroy their navy and other security infrastructure, and they will never have nuclear weapons.”

For decades, Iran has been in pursuit of a nuclear weapons capability, through both enrichment of weapons-grade nuclear material and development of missiles that can carry a nuclear warhead.

In June 2025, during Operation Midnight Hammer, the United States struck Iran’s Fordow Fuel Enrichment Plant using 30,000-pound GBU-57 “massive ordnance penetrator” bombs. That operation, Hegseth said, obliterated Iran’s nuclear program.

Nevertheless, Hegseth said, the Iranians have persisted in pursuing a nuclear capability and in building conventional capabilities to protect their nuclear ambitions.

“Iran was building powerful missiles and drones to create a conventional shield for their nuclear blackmail ambitions,” he said. “Our bases, our people, our allies, all in their crosshairs – Iran had a conventional gun to our head as they tried to lie their way to a nuclear bomb.”

The secretary said the clear goals for Epic Fury mean it will be unlike past American conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

“Our ambitions are not utopian; they are realistic, scoped to our interests and the defense of our people and our allies,” he said. “This is not Iraq. This is not endless. ... This is the

opposite. This operation [has] a clear, devastating, decisive mission: destroy the missile threat, destroy the navy, no news.”

Hegseth said Epic Fury doesn't include nation-building or democracy building goals.

Air Force Gen. Dan Caine, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said planning for an operation such as Epic Fury has been underway for a significant amount of time.

“This marked the culmination of months, and in some cases, years, of deliberate planning and refinement against this particular target set,” Caine said. “From precision strikes against key military infrastructure to persistent intelligence and targeting integration to the close coordination of the components across vast distances, this operation again demonstrated America's reach, readiness and professionalism, and that of our joint united force.”

Setting the Force

Over the last 30 days, at the direction of the secretary, Caine said, the joint force repositioned forces around the region in order to provide President Donald J. Trump with options, if he intended to act.

“These movements ensured that U.S. forces remained postured, protected and ready to respond decisively [to] any emerging threat,” he said.

That effort included thousands of service members, hundreds of advanced fighter aircraft, refueling tankers, a sustained flow of munitions, fuel and supplies, and the USS Abraham Lincoln and USS Gerald R. Ford carrier strike groups, along with their air wings. More capabilities continue to flow into the region, Caine said.

“This rapid buildup of forces demonstrated the joint force's

ability to adapt and project power at the time and place of our nation's choosing," Caine said.

The final word that Epic Fury was going to happen, he added, came Friday afternoon from the president.

"Operation Epic Fury approved. No aborts. Good luck," Caine said, relaying the message from the president.

"In the region, every element of the joint force made their final preparations," he said. "Air defense batteries readied themselves, checking their systems to respond to Iranian attacks. Pilots and crews rehearsed their strike packages for the final time. Air crews began loading their final weapons, and two carrier strike groups began to move towards their launching points across the globe."

Epic Fury

U.S. Cyber Command and U.S. Space Command, he said, initiated action with non-kinetic effects to disable Iran's communications ability. And then, at 1:15 a.m. EST, 9:45 a.m. Tehran time, Epic Fury kicked off.

"More than 100 aircraft launched from land and sea: fighters, tankers, airborne early warning, electronic attack, bombers from the states and unmanned platforms forming a single synchronized wave," he said. "This was a daylight strike based on a trigger event conducted by the Israeli Defense Forces, enabled by the U.S. intelligence community."

On the sea, the U.S. Navy launched Tomahawk missiles at Iran and attacked Iranian naval forces. While on the ground, he said, coordinated salvos of precision standoff weapons from across the region have neutralized hundreds of preplanned targets.

"This was a massive, overwhelming attack across all domains of warfare, striking more than 1,000 targets in the first 24

hours,” Caine said. “We are now roughly 57 hours into the operation. In the initial phase, Centcom’s focus was systematic, targeting of Iranian command and control, infrastructure, naval forces, ballistic missile sites and intelligence infrastructure – designed to daze and confuse them.”

As a result of strikes in Iran, Caine said the U.S. has established local air superiority, which enhances the ability to protect U.S. forces and allows them to continue operations there.

“Operation Epic Fury stands as a reminder of what the United States military uniquely delivers: the ability to project power on a global scale with speed, surprise, precision and overwhelming force, when and where our nation requires it,” Caine said. “What we’ve demonstrated over the past several days reflects years of investment in readiness, joint integration and professionalism of the joint force.”

During the briefing, Hegseth also directly addressed U.S. troops who are participating in Epic Fury, telling them that both he and the president have their backs.

“We will finish this on ‘America First’ conditions of President Trump’s choosing – nobody else’s – as it should be,” Hegseth said. “And know this above all, President Trump and I have your back, always. Through fire, through criticism, through fake news, through everything, we unleash you because you are the best, most powerful, most lethal fighting force the world has ever seen.”

U.S. Forces Launch Operation Epic Fury



From U.S. Central Command, Feb. 28, 2026

TAMPA, Fla. – U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) commenced Operation Epic Fury, Feb. 28, at the direction of the President of the United States.

U.S. and partner forces began striking targets at 1:15 am ET to dismantle the Iranian regime's security apparatus, prioritizing locations that posed an imminent threat. Targets included Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps command and control facilities, Iranian air defense capabilities, missile and drone launch sites, and military airfields.

"The President ordered bold action, and our brave Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Guardians, and Coast Guardsmen are answering the call," said Adm. Brad Cooper, commander of

CENTCOM.

Following the initial wave of U.S. and partner strikes, CENTCOM forces successfully defended against hundreds of Iranian missile and drone attacks. There have been no reports of U.S. casualties or combat-related injuries. Damage to U.S. installations was minimal and has not impacted operations.

The first hours of the operation included precision munitions launched from air, land, and sea. Additionally, CENTCOM's Task Force Scorpion Strike employed low-cost one-way attack drones for the first time in combat.

Operation Epic Fury involves the largest regional concentration of American military firepower in a generation.

Xeneta: Strikes Against Iran Shatter Prospects of Return of Red Sea Container Shipping



From Xeneta

OSLO – Norway, 28 February 2026 – The US and Israel carried out a joint military operation today, 28 February, targeting sites in Iran. Iran has responded with retaliatory military action.

Below is immediate insight from Xeneta Chief Analyst Peter Sand on implications for global ocean container shipping supply chains, with particular focus on the impact on Red Sea.

Peter Sand, Xeneta Chief Analyst:

“The repercussions of the joint military operation by the US and Israel against Iran and subsequent retaliatory action will see the further weaponization of trade and shatter hopes of a largescale return of container shipping to the Red Sea in 2026.

“Carriers had been returning selected east-west ocean container services to transits via Suez Canal in recent months after sailing around Cape of Good Hope since late 2023 due to attacks by Iran-backed Houthi militia in the Red Sea region.

“If Houthi militia resume attacks, as now seems likely, carriers will reverse the decision to return services to the Red Sea and prioritize the safety of crew, ship and cargo. Any plans for a phased return of container shipping to the Red Sea in 2026 will be shelved until the security situation becomes clearer.

“Carriers are on red alert and we have seen signs of them preempting this security deterioration in the Middle East, notably with CMA CGM last month reversing a decision to return its FAL1, FAL3 and MEX to the Red Sea citing ‘the complex and uncertain international context’.

“Earlier this week, Maersk announced its ME11 and MECL services would be rerouted via Cape of Good Hope due to security concerns in the Red Sea region.

Impact on ocean container shipping capacity and freight rates:

“Longer sailing distances around Cape of Good Hope absorb around 2.5 million TEU (20ft equivalent container units) of global container shipping capacity and increase the transport demands on the fleet. A largescale return of container shipping to the Red Sea region would free up this capacity, slash transit times and potentially see freight rates collapse at a global level.

“Average spot rates from China to US East Coast and US West Coast are down 32% and 35% respectively since the start of 2026. From China to North Europe and Mediterranean, average spot rates are down 23% and 33%.

“With a largescale return of container ships to Red Sea in 2026 now unlikely, freight rates on major global trades will continue to soften, but will not fall as hard as previously expected in the second half of the year as more services returned to Suez Canal transits.

“Compared to pre-Red Sea crisis (1 December 2023), average spot rates from China to North Europe and Mediterranean – the two trades most operationally impacted by the diversions around Cape of Good Hope – are still up 48% and 79% respectively.”

Impact on Middle East region:

“Ocean container services in Persian Gulf have continued unaffected by the recent build-up of military forces in the region, but the escalation in conflict through military strikes mean ships will now avoid the area, but for as short a time as possible.

“Average spot rates from China to UAE have ticked up 5% since 15 February to stand at USD 1572 per FEU (40ft equivalent container), no doubt pushed up by concerns over the security situation and shippers being worried about their goods getting in and out of ports in the Persian Gulf.

“There is no viable alternative to getting containers in or out of ports such as Jebel Ali by ocean if Persian Gulf is off limits. Carriers will instead omit these calls on east-west services and drop boxes at a least-worst alternative port for onward transportation by road.

“This will cause severe disruption and port congestion at a regional level, but will not have a major impact on a global

scale when compared to the seismic influence of conflict in the Red Sea.”

Coast Guard interdicts 14 aliens near Point Loma



A Coast Guard Cutter Forrest Rednour (WPC 1129) boarding team interdicts a suspected alien vessel March 1, 2026, approximately 10 miles southwest of Point Loma, Calif. The crew discovered 14 individuals aboard, claiming El Salvadoran,

Nicaraguan, Columbian, Guatemalan, and Mexican nationality.
(U.S. Coast Guard courtesy photo)

From U.S. Coast Guard Southwest District, March 1, 2026

SAN DIEGO – The Coast Guard interdicted 14 suspected aliens approximately 10 miles southwest of Point Loma, San Diego, Sunday.

At approximately 12 a.m., U.S. Customs and Border Protection Air and Marine Operations detected a panga-style vessel transiting into U.S. waters and requested Coast Guard Cutter Forrest Rednour (WPC 1129) to intercept.

The Rednour's boarding team interdicted the vessel and identified 14 suspected aliens aboard. The individuals claimed nationality from El Salvador, Nicaragua, Columbia, Guatemala, and Mexico.

All suspected aliens were transported to Imperial Beach Border Patrol at Ballast Point.

**Austal USA Launches
Final EPF, the Future USNS
Lansing**



From Austal USA

MOBILE, Ala. – Austal USA launched the company’s second ship in less than a week, the Navy’s final Expeditionary Fast Transport, future USNS Lansing (EPF 16) in Mobile, Ala., February 25, 2026. The U.S. Navy’s 16th Expeditionary Fast Transport (EPF), christened in early January, is now docked pier side for final outfitting and system activation in preparation for sea trials later this year.

During this launch process, self-propelled modular transporters (SPMT) lifted the ship almost three feet and moved it approximately 400 feet onto a deck barge moored adjacent to the final assembly bay. The barge moved the ship downriver where the ship was placed in a floating dry dock. The EPF was submerged in the dry dock enabling it to float for the first time, and it was returned back upriver to Austal USA’s new construction facility. This is the 26th ship launched at Austal USA using this proven process.

“The successful launch of this final Expeditionary Fast Transport is a true reflection of the power of teamwork and our commitment to applying lessons learned to every aspect of

our work,” said Gene Miller, Austal USA Interim President. “Our test and activation teams, crane and rigging crews, and safety personnel worked seamlessly alongside our Navy partners and trusted vendors like Berard Transportation, Alabama Shipyard, and E.N. Bisso & Son tug services. These strong partnerships enable us to continuously refine our processes, identify areas for improvement, and efficiently achieve critical shipbuilding milestones to further support and strengthen the maritime industrial base.”

Production efforts on EPF 16 will shift to final outfitting and system activation to support future USNS Lansing, the Navy’s third EPF Flight II medical variant, getting underway for sea trials.

Gerald R. Ford Crew Demonstrates Resilience, Readiness During Extended Deployment



Photo: U.S. Navy.

From U.S. Fleet Forces Command

NORFOLK, Va. – More than eight months into an extended deployment, the Sailors of USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) continue to demonstrate resilience, professionalism, and sustained morale while serving far from home.

Gerald R. Ford departed Naval Station Norfolk on June 24, 2025. Since that time, the ship and Carrier Strike Group 12 have continued to operate at a high state of readiness. Navy leaders acknowledge that extended time away from families carries real and measurable sacrifice.

“Extended deployments demand endurance,” said Adm. Daryl Caudle, Chief of Naval Operations. “They ask Sailors to miss births, anniversaries, and everyday moments at home. They ask families to shoulder additional responsibility. That sacrifice is real, and we do not take it lightly. The nation relies on these Sailors to remain forward and ready, and they continue

to meet that responsibility with professionalism and pride.” Caudle emphasized that sustained readiness begins with people and empowering them to succeed.

“The morale aboard Gerald R. Ford remains strong because leadership is engaged, systems are operating, and Sailors understand the importance of their mission,” he said. “This crew is experienced, disciplined, and committed to one another. That cohesion matters during long deployments.”

Caudle has been in constant contact with Rear Adm. Paul Lanzilotta, commander of Carrier Strike Group 12, who said maintaining morale requires deliberate daily attention and frequent communication.

“Long deployments are challenging,” Lanzilotta said. “Fatigue accumulates and time away from home weighs on Sailors. Our responsibility as leaders is to ensure they are supported – with reliable shipboard services, clear communication, and consistent engagement. I have walked the decks of Gerald R. Ford repeatedly during this deployment. What I see is a crew that remains focused, capable, and proud of the work they are doing.”

In recent weeks, media reports have raised concerns regarding shipboard systems, including sanitation. Navy officials state that Gerald R. Ford’s systems are operating within expected parameters for a Ford-class aircraft carrier with more than 4,000 personnel embarked. During this deployment, Gerald R. Ford’s vacuum collection, holding, and transfer (VCHT) system has processed more than six million toilet flushes. Ship leadership reports that clog incidents are addressed promptly by trained damage control and engineering personnel, with minimal downtime.

“On a ship this size, with this many Sailors, clogs will occur,” said Capt. David Skarosi, commanding officer of USS Gerald R. Ford. “What matters is how quickly they are

resolved. Our maintenance teams respond immediately, and the system continues to function as designed with no impact to operational readiness or our ability to meet our mission. I am engaged daily with any concerns regarding the health, wellbeing, and morale of the crew.”

“In most instances,” Skarosi added, “clogs are the result of items being flushed that should not be introduced into the system. When Sailors follow proper procedures, the system performs reliably. We continue to train new Sailors and reinforce those standards across the crew.”

Beyond sanitation systems, Gerald R. Ford continues to emphasize and sustain quality of life conditions. The ship’s reverse osmosis systems produce more than 400,000 gallons of potable water daily, supporting hot showers, laundry, food preparation, and drinking water requirements. The Supply Department has served more than four million meals since departure, supported by consistent underway replenishment operations delivering fresh produce, frozen goods, and dry stores.

Bandwidth availability for morale, welfare, and recreation internet access has expanded during the deployment through commercial satellite augmentation, including Starlink capability. That increased connectivity has improved Sailors’ ability to communicate with families, access news, and utilize approved streaming services during off-duty hours.

“Connectivity and routine matter,” Lanzilotta said. “When Sailors can speak with their families, read trusted news sources, maintain physical fitness, and rely on stable shipboard systems, it strengthens resilience.” Command-sponsored initiatives throughout the deployment have included morale and holiday events when operationally feasible, physical fitness competitions, movie nights, educational advancement programs, and expanded chaplain and counseling

availability. Leadership routinely inspects berthing and workspaces to identify and correct quality of life concerns early.

“Our Sailors understand the importance of their service,” Caudle said. “They are away from home longer than planned because the nation needs them forward and ready. I want them to take great pride in that calling. The American people should be confident that USS Gerald R. Ford remains ready, and they should be proud of the men and women serving aboard her.”

Gerald R. Ford recently completed a port call to Souda Bay, Crete for a routine, scheduled resupply of food, fuel, and ammunitions. While in port, Sailors had the opportunity to rest and enjoy recreational activities on the island, serving as a significant morale boost.

USS Gerald R. Ford is the lead ship of her class and incorporates an advanced flight deck design, state-of-the-art launch and recovery systems, enhanced electrical capacity, and quality of life features designed to support sustained operations at sea. The new systems incorporated into Ford-class ships, such as the Electromagnetic Aircraft Launch System (EMALS) and advanced arresting gear (AAG), are designed to deliver greater lethality and joint interoperability. While the Navy is still analyzing the data, preliminary reports from the Sortie Generation Rate test program show that the flight deck design in conjunction with EMALS and AAG have contributed to an increased sortie generation rate compared to that of a Nimitz-class carrier. As of today, these systems are operating as designed, and the Ford continues with scheduled mission tasking.

Carrier Strike Group 12 includes USS Gerald R. Ford, embarked Carrier Air Wing Eight, and assigned guided-missile destroyers. The strike group remains fully mission capable and committed to maintaining the highest standards of

safety, professionalism, and Sailor well-being.

U.S. Navy to Christen Future USNS Robert Ballard

[From Team Ships Public Affairs](#)

PASCAGOULA, Ms. – The U.S. Navy will christen the future USNS Robert Ballard (T-AGS 67) during a ceremony at Bollinger Mississippi Shipbuilding in Pascagoula, Mississippi, Feb. 28 at 10:00 a.m. (CST).

The principal address will be delivered by Dr. Robert Ballard, the ship's namesake. Additional speakers will include the Honorable Cindy Hyde-Smith, U.S. Senator, Mississippi; the Honorable Brendan Rogers, Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Energy, Installations and Environment; Rear Adm. Benjamin Nicholson, commander, Military Sealift Command; Rear Adm. Erin Acosta, commander, Naval Meteorology and Oceanography Command; and Mr. Ben Bordelon, president and CEO, Bollinger Shipyards.

In a time-honored tradition, ship sponsor Barbara Earle Ballard, spouse of the namesake and president of Odyssey Enterprises, will christen the ship by breaking a bottle of sparkling wine across the bow.

The ship is named in honor of Dr. Robert Ballard, a retired U.S. Navy commander and a tenured professor of Oceanography at the University of Rhode Island's Graduate School of Oceanography. Ballard is also a National Geographic Explorer at Large. Ballard is renowned for discovering the final resting place of the RMS Titanic.

The christening of the future USNS Robert Ballard underscores the Navy's commitment to building America's Golden Fleet. For 250 years, American naval power has projected strength globally. That mission continues – and intensifies. We operate forward 24/7, 365 days a year. This operational tempo demands continuous capability delivery, and the Golden Fleet is our answer.

Oceanographic survey ships have two multipurpose cranes and five winches, plus a variety of oceanographic equipment including multibeam echo-sounders, towed sonars and expendable sensors.

For more on Oceanographic Survey Ships, visit: <https://www.navy.mil/Resources/Fact-Files/Display-FactFiles/Article/2222996/oceanographic-survey-ships-t-ags/>

U.S. Coast Guard Accepts Delivery of 62nd Fast Response Cutter Named for 9/11 Hero



The USCGC Vincent Danz (WPC 1162), seen here moored in Key West, Florida, the day prior to its official acceptance as the U.S. Coast Guard's newest cutter on Feb. 26, 2026. The cutter is named for Vincent Danz, a New York City police officer and U.S. Coast Guard reservist who made the ultimate sacrifice on Sept. 11, 2001, while responding to the attacks on the World Trade Center. (U.S. Coast Guard photo)

[From U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia](#)

KEY WEST – The U.S. Coast Guard accepted delivery of the 62nd Fast Response Cutter, USCGC Vincent Danz (WPC 1162), on Thursday in Key West.

The Vincent Danz is the fourth FRC to be homeported to Guam.

“Accepting delivery of the Vincent Danz, Guam’s newest Fast Response Cutter, demonstrates the Coast Guard’s enduring commitment to the security of our Nation, the Pacific, and our partners throughout Oceania,” said Capt. Jessica Worst, commander, Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam. “Vincent

Danz exemplified selfless service as a New York police officer and Coast Guard reservist. This cutter will honor his legacy by protecting lives, combating illicit activity, and ensuring maritime security of our coasts, across Micronesia and beyond.”

The Sentinel-class FRCs replace the 1980s Island-class 110-foot patrol boats and possess 21st-century command, control, communications, computers, cyber, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance equipment, with improved habitability and seakeeping.

The U.S. Coast Guard ordered a total of 77 FRCs to date to perform a range of missions, including countering illicit maritime activities, search and rescue, bilateral and multilateral international operations, and the national defense of ports, waterways, and coastal areas.

Each FRC is named after an enlisted U.S. Coast Guard hero who performed extraordinary service in the line of duty. Vincent Danz was a New York City police officer and U.S. Coast Guard reservist who made the ultimate sacrifice on Sept. 11, 2001, while responding to the attacks on the World Trade Center. Danz was a veteran of the United States Marine Corps and joined the New York City Police Department in 1987, while continuing to serve in the Coast Guard Reserve as a Port Security Specialist 2nd Class.

Danz was serving in the New York City Police Department, Emergency Services Unit, ESU Truck 3, when he responded to the World Trade Center as part of a massive emergency response and was killed when the World Trade Center collapsed. He was posthumously awarded the New York City Police Department’s Medal of Honor for his heroic deeds. His actions that day embodied the Coast Guard’s core values of honor, respect, and devotion to duty.

“It’s an honor, and we’re all incredibly proud to carry on the

legacy of heroes like Vincent Danz,” said Petty Officer David Somera, the engineering petty officer and a proud son of Guam. “This third time I’ve been part of such a commissioning crew, and there’s a deeper appreciation for what it takes to bring a cutter to life. You start with this perfectly new ship, and it’s our job as the first crew to turn it from a steel vessel into a living, breathing part of the Coast Guard. It’s more than the mechanics; we’re building a team and a home that will serve and protect the people of Guam and the Pacific.”

The FRCs homeported in the U.S. territory of Guam extend the U.S. Coast Guard and Oceania District’s operational reach across the Pacific, conducting maritime security operations, combating illegal fishing, supporting search and rescue missions, and strengthening partnerships with Pacific Island nations and Allies. These cutter crews are essential to maintaining a safe, secure, and prosperous Pacific in one of the world’s most expansive maritime regions.

Vincent Danz will join the Myrtle Hazard (WPC 1139), Oliver Henry (WPC 1140), and Frederick Hatch (WPC 1143), commissioned in 2021 in Guam. Since their 2021 commissioning, Guam’s FRC crews distinguished themselves across the region.

USCGC Myrtle Hazard became the first to operationalize the bilateral maritime law enforcement agreement with Papua New Guinea, conducting joint patrols and boardings in 2023. USCGC Oliver Henry saved mariners in the Federated States of Micronesia, delivered humanitarian assistance during the Yap drought, and towed the 500-ton yacht Black Pearl to Palau, rescuing 11 people in 2024. USCGC Frederick Hatch became the first FRC to visit numerous Pacific ports, including Tacloban, Philippines, for the 80th anniversary of the Battle of Leyte Gulf, and operationalized the enhanced bilateral agreement with Palau in 2024. In the Marianas, the crews of all three cutters saved multiple lives, delivered critical supplies, and suppressed asymmetric migration.

Sixty-one FRCs are in service: 13 in Florida; seven in Puerto Rico; six each in Bahrain and Massachusetts; five in Alaska; four in California; three each in Hawaii, Guam, Texas, New Jersey, and Mississippi; and two each in North Carolina and Oregon.

**Coast Guard Interdicts
Suspected Drug Smuggling
Vessel, Seizes \$1.3M in
Narcotics**



A suspected drug smuggling vessel tied to the pier following an interdiction by the crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Richard Etheridge 8 miles off Miami, Florida, Feb. 21, 2026. The Etheridge's crew seized approximately 17 pounds of marijuana and 174 pounds of cocaine found aboard the vessel. (U.S. Coast Guard photo)

From Coast Guard Southeast District, Feb. 27, 2026

MIAMI – Coast Guard Cutter Richard Etheridge's crew interdicted a suspected smuggling vessel, Saturday, at approximately 2:15 p.m., about 8 miles offshore of Miami.

During the boarding, the joint law enforcement crew found approximately 17 pounds of marijuana and 174 pounds of cocaine, later confirmed through laboratory testing, worth an

estimated \$1.3 million.

The two suspected smugglers were taken into custody for further investigation by Homeland Security Investigations.

“Our crew is committed to keeping drugs off the streets and protecting America’s borders,” said Lt. Zane Carter, commanding officer, Coast Guard Cutter Richard Etheridge. “I could not be prouder of my crew’s professionalism and their seamless integration with our partner agencies.”

Agencies involved in the interdiction:

- Coast Guard Southeast District

- Coast Guard Sector Miami

- Coast Guard Cutter Richard Etheridge

- Coast Guard Investigative Service

- Homeland Security Investigations

- Customs and Border Protection Office of Field Operations
K9 unit

- Customs and Border Protection Air and Marine Operations