IRGCN Interaction with U.S. Naval Vessels in the North Arabian Gulf

Three Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy (IRGCN) fast inshore attack craft (FIAC) approach the U.S. Coast Guard patrol boat USCGC Baranof (WPB 1318) and patrol coastal ship USS Firebolt (PC 10), while the U.S. vessels were conducting routine maritime security patrols in the international waters of the North Arabian Gulf, April 26. Firebolt is assigned to U.S. Naval Forces Central Command's Task Force (TF) 55 and Baranof is assigned to Patrol Forces Southwest Asia (PATFORSWA), the largest U.S. Coast Guard unit outside the United States, and operates under TF 55. *U.S. NAVY*

BAHRAIN – At approximately 8 p.m. on April 26, three Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy (IRGCN) fast inshore attack craft (FIAC) failed to exercise due regard for the safety of other vessels as required under international law as they came into close proximity to U.S. naval vessels in international waters of the north Arabian Gulf, the U.S. 5th Fleet said in an April 27 release.

The IRGCN armed speed boats rapidly approached U.S. Navy patrol coastal ship USS Firebolt (PC 10) and U.S. Coast Guard patrol boat USCGC Baranoff (WPB 1318) to an unnecessarily close range with unknown intent, including a closest point of approach (CPA) of 68 yards to both U.S. ships.

Firebolt and Baranoff were conducting routine maritime security operations in international waters during the time of the incident.

The U.S. crews issued multiple warnings via bridge-to-bridge radio and loud-hailer devices, but the IRGCN vessels continued their close-range maneuvers. The crew of Firebolt then fired warning shots, and the IRGCN vessels moved away to a safe distance from the U.S. vessels.

Throughout the interaction, U.S. forces proactively communicated with the IRGCN vessels and executed pre-planned responses to reduce the risk of miscalculation, avoid a collision, and to de-escalate the situation.

The IRGCN’s actions increased the risk of miscalculation and/or collision, were not in accordance with the internationally recognized Convention on the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (COLREGS) “rules of the road” or internationally recognized maritime customs. In addition, the IRGCN actions were not in accordance with the obligation under international law to act with due regard for the safety of other vessels in the area.

U.S. naval forces continue to remain vigilant and are trained to act in a professional manner, while commanding officers retain the inherent right to act in self-defense.

U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Enters Black Sea

Seaman Cheyenne Solis Headlam looks out from the bridge wing of USCGC Hamilton (WMSL 753) while the Turkish coast guard escorts Hamilton in the Mediterranean Sea, April 27, 2021. U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Hamilton is on a routine deployment in the U.S. 6th Fleet area of operations in support of U.S. national interests and security in Europe and Africa. *U.S. COAST GUARD photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Sydney Phoenix*

BLACK SEA — The Legend-class national security cutter USCGC Hamilton (WMSL 753) transited into the Black Sea to support NATO Allies and partners, April 27, 2021, the U.S. U.S. Naval Forces Europe and Africa/U.S. 6th Fleet Public Affairs said in an April 27 release.

Hamilton is the first U.S. Coast Guard cutter to visit the Black Sea since 2008. The last U.S. Coast Guard cutter to visit the Black Sea, USCGC Dallas (WHEC 716), sailed to the Black Sea twice, in 2008 and 1995.

The Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Monterey (CG 61) and Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Thomas Hudner (DDG 116) conducted Black Sea operations on a routine patrol to maintain maritime security alongside other NATO Allies and partners in March 2021.

This patrol comes after Hamilton conducted logistics visits to Naples, Italy, and Rota, Spain. The U.S. Coast Guard is conducting a routine deployment in U.S. 6th Fleet, working alongside allies, building maritime domain awareness and sharing best practices with partner nation navies and coast guards.

The U.S. Navy and U.S. Coast Guard operate forward, from the littoral to the open ocean, ensuring stability and open sea lanes across all maritime domains. U.S 6th Fleet routinely conducts operations in the Black Sea.

Hamilton is the fourth national security cutter and is the fifth named for the father of the U.S. Coast Guard — Alexander Hamilton, the first secretary of the Treasury and advocate for creating the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service.

The U.S. Coast Guard remains operational during COVID-19, following all COVID-19 safety precautions and regulations.

Coast Guard Cutter Delivers Emergency Supplies to Palau following Typhoon Surigae

The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Myrtle Hazard (WPC 1139) deliver emergency supplies to the island of Kayangel, Palau, following Typhoon Surigae, April 24, 2021.The supplies included water and food for the people of Kayangel. *U.S. COAST GUARD photo courtesy of Petty Officer 3rd Class Philip Groff*

SANTA RITA, Guam – The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Myrtle Hazard (WPC 1139) delivered emergency supplies including water and food to the island of Kayangel, April 24, the Coast Guard 14th District said in an April 26 release.

The mission was in response to a national emergency declared by President Surangel Whipps Jr. of Palau after Typhoon Surigae devastated the region last week.

"Today, our crew had a unique opportunity to conduct one of the most satisfying missions the United States Coast Guard is known for, humanitarian aid," said Petty Officer 2nd Class Andrew Johnson, a coxswain aboard the Myrtle Hazard. "We were extremely excited to be able to offer help, which for a small island such as Kayangel makes a major impact. I am proud I was

able to be a part of it.”

Last week the slow-moving typhoon made landfall in Palau bringing significant rainfall and heavy winds. The storm caused flooding and resulted in damage to homes and properties throughout the islands.

On April 18, the president of Palau declared a national emergency and made an official request to the United States embassy for assistance. Capt. Christopher Chase, commander, Coast Guard Sector Guam and Ambassador John Hennessey-Niland, U.S. Embassy Koror, spoke by phone and determined what supplies were needed and the best method to deliver them.

At the time, the Myrtle Hazard’s crew was conducting an illegal, unreported and unregulated fisheries patrol north of Guam and was recalled back to homeport for the humanitarian mission.

On Guam, supplies were being donated and collected by a number of different organizations including the Chief Petty Officers Association Marianas Chapter, the U.S Naval Base Chapel, the Orotte Commissary, the Ngaraad Club of Guam, the Kayangel Club of Guam and the Guam Paluan community.

The cutter then departed Guam for the 800 nautical mile transit to Palau with the supplies.

Upon arriving in Palau the crew worked closely with the government and the U.S. embassy to coordinate a safe, contactless transfer of the supplies to Kayangel and to ensure the safety of both the people of Palau and the cutters crew while conserving the nation’s vital medical supplies.

“It’s a rewarding mission to deliver aid whenever required,” said Lt. Tony Seleznick, the Myrtle Hazard’s commanding officer. “This operation exemplified the great partnership between the U.S. and the Republic of Palau. The crew of Myrtle Hazard performed excellently and highlighted why the U.S.

Coast Guard is the world’s best Coast Guard.”

USSOCOM Awards AeroVironment $26 Million for Switchblade 600 Tactical Missile Systems

An artist’s illustration of the Switchblade 600. *AEROVIRONMENT*

SIMI VALLEY, Calif. — AeroVironment Inc. has been awarded a cost-plus-fixed-fee contract on March 31, 2021, by the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) for $26 million with $7 million funded upon receipt. The contract includes delivery and integration of Switchblade 600 tactical missile systems into specialized maritime platforms, scheduled to be completed by January 2023.

“Our team worked closely with our customers to develop Switchblade 600, a loitering missile system that addresses the increasingly complex needs and mission requirements of counterinsurgency operations and those against peer and near-peer adversaries,” said Brett Hush, AeroVironment vice president and product line general manager for tactical missile systems. “Integrating Switchblade 600 into combat platforms, such as the USSOCOM’s specialized maritime vessels, enhances force overmatch, minimizes warfighter exposure to enemy direct and indirect fires and accelerates the maturation of this innovative solution.”

The AeroVironment Switchblade 600 is an all-in-one, man-portable system equipped with a high-performance electro-optical/infrared gimbaled sensor suite, precision flight control and more than 40 minutes of flight time to deliver unprecedented tactical reconnaissance, surveillance and target acquisition (RSTA). Its anti-armor warhead enables engagement and prosecution of hardened static and moving light armored vehicles from multiple angles – without external ISR or fires assets – for precise, localized effects and minimal collateral damage.

GAO Report: Massive Sustainment Costs Creating F-35 Affordability Issues

An F-35B Lightning II assigned to the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) lands on the flight deck o the forward-deployed amphibious assault ship USS America (LHA 6). America, lead ship of the America Amphibious Ready Group, along with the 31st MEU, is operating in the U.S. 7th Fleet area of responsibility to enhance interoperability with allies and partners and serve as a ready response force to defend peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Matthew Cavenaile*

ARLINGTON, Va. — Sustaining the troubled Lockheed Martin F-35 Lightning II strike fighter over its expected 66-year service life will cost more than the total purchase price of thousands of the aircraft, the Pentagon's most expensive weapons platform, a government watchdog told lawmakers.

The Defense Department plans to acquire nearly 2,500 F-35 aircraft for about $400 billion over the next five decades for the Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps. However, the latest Government Accountability Office (GAO) report on the nation's biggest weapons program indicates the services will incur an additional $1.3 trillion in sustainment costs for maintenance,

repairs and technology upgrades over that same period.

That raises the issue of the services' affordability targets, "how much the Air Force, the Navy and Marine Corps can afford to spend to sustain the F-35," GAO's Diana Maurer, director of military structure and operational issues, told a joint hearing by two subcommittees of the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) April 22. Originally estimated at $1.11 trillion in 2012, sustainment costs for the Fifth Generation fighter have grown to $1.27 trillion, despite efforts to reduce costs.

"The bottom line here is the services have a plane that they can't afford to fly the way they want to fly it, at least in the long term," Maurer told the HASC Tactical Air and Land Forces and the Readiness subcomittees.

The services face a substantial and growing gap between estimated sustainment costs and affordability constraints – costs per tail, per year that the services project they can afford. The preliminary GAO report to Congress said the gap would total about $6 billion in steady state year 2036 alone. The services will collectively be confronted with tens of billions of dollars in sustainment costs that they project as unaffordable during the program.

Marines with Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 211 conduct pre-flight checks on F-35B Lightning II Joint Strike Fighters aboard the Royal Navy aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth (R 08) in the North Sea, Oct. 10, 2020. VMFA-211 is an F-35B Lightning II squadron assigned to Marine Aircraft Group 13, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing. Its mission is to intercept and

destroy enemy aircraft under all weather conditions and attack and destroy surface targets in support of Fleet Marine Expeditionary Forces. *U.S. MARINE CORPS / 1st Lt. Zachary Bodner*

The Air Force, which is buying the most aircraft, 1,763 F-35As – the conventional takeoff and landing variant – needs to reduce estimated annual per-plane costs by $3.7 million (or 47%) by 2036, or costs in that year alone will be $4.4 billion more than the Air Force can afford, the GAO said. The Navy and Marine Corps, which are buying hundreds fewer aircraft, face smaller, but significant affordability gaps. For the Navy, which plans to buy 273 F-35Cs, the aircraft carrier variant, the gap would total $655 million, and for the Marine Corps buy of 353 F-35Bs, the short takeoff and vertical landing variant, and 67 of their own F-35Cs, the total cost overrun in 2036 would be $886 million.

GAO's draft report suggested Congress consider requiring annual Pentagon reports on progress in achieving the affordability constraints. It also suggested making F-35 procurement decisions contingent on Defense Department in achieving these constraints.

Subcommittee members' reaction to the report ranged from outrage to dismay. If the F-35 program can't control and reduce sustainment costs, "we may need to invest in other, more affordable programs," said New Jersey Democrat Rep. Donald Norcross, chairman of the readiness subcommittee.

VTG Awarded $116M NIWC-PAC

Contract for C4ISR Engineering and Production

The Naval Information Warfare Center Pacific tests there autonomy software system on an Amphibious Assault Vehicle provided by the Amphibious Vehicle Testing Branch at the Del Mar Boat Basin on Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, California, Sept. 23, 2019. *U.S. MARINE CORPS Lance Cpl. Andrew Cortez*

CHANTILLY, Va. – VTG, a provider of force modernization and digital transformation solutions, has won a prime contract from the Naval Information Warfare Center Pacific (NIWC-PAC) to provide C4ISR engineering and production services to its Network Integration Engineering Facility, the company said in an April 26 release.

The indefinite delivery, indefinite quantity NIEF Production Services contract has a potential value of $116 million over a five-year performance period.

“For more than 50 years, VTG has provided the Naval Information Warfare Systems Command and NIWC-PAC with C4ISR installation and integration support both afloat and ashore,” said John Hassoun, VTG president and chief executive officer. “We’re proud of that longstanding partnership and excited about this new opportunity to leverage our growing C4ISR production capabilities in support of the NIEF’s mission.”

The NIWC-PAC NIEF, located at NAVWAR headquarters in San Diego, California, specializes in the rapid design and integration of commercial and government off-the-shelf products for military applications. It also provides environmental qualification testing services for those products and limited- and full-rate production. The facility was modernized in 2019 to better support the design and delivery of advanced information warfare capabilities to the fleet.

VTG will provide the NIEF with procurement, fabrication, and integration of C4ISR end items, including production units, ancillary kits, sub-systems, assemblies, sub-assemblies, modules, and spares. These end items include a full spectrum of C4ISR systems for surface ships, submarines, and shore-based applications.

Navy’s Unmanned Systems Battle Problem Features All-Domain Sensing

A Vanilla ultra endurance land-launched unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) undergoes operational pre-flight checks during U.S. Pacific Fleet's Unmanned Integrated Battle Problem (UxS IBP) 21 at Naval Base Ventura County, Point Mugu. UxS IBP 21 integrates manned and unmanned capabilities into challenging operational scenarios to generate warfighting advantages. *U.S. NAVY / Construction Mechanic 2nd Class Michael Schutt*

ARLINGTON, Va.— The Unmanned Systems Integrated Battle Problem (UxS IBP) conducted off the coast of California over the last week featured sensor data exchange and remote sensing in all domains from seabed to space, and involved a variety of scenarios, including swarm attacks by drones and launch and recovery of an unmanned underwater vehicle by a submarine.

Rear Adm. Robert Gaucher, director of the Maritime Headquarters for the U.S. Pacific Fleet, and Rear Adm. James Aiken, commander, Carrier Strike Group Three, and commander of the IBP, spoke about the exercise to reporters during an April 26 teleconference.

"Just yesterday, we successfully teamed air and surface manned

and unmanned capability to put [an SM-6 missile] well past over the horizon from [the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS] John Finn on a target and it struck the target very, very successfully," Aiken said.

The manned/unmanned chain of events for the missile shoot was totally passive, [without] any active sensor. The target was detected by a combination of manned and unmanned platforms and a space system to locate and identify the target, track it with electronic support measures (ESM) bearings and pass the information to the John Finn, which was able to shoot the SM-6 at range, well beyond line of sight.

The admiral said the vignettes exercised during the IBP included focused warfighter vignettes, an anti-submarine warfare and surface ISR [intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance] vignette, and an over-the-horizon strike vignette, the latter being the SM-6 event mentioned above.

Unmanned surface and air systems were used to prosecute a submarine-like target. This event included an MQ-9 SeaGuardian UAV dropping sonobuoys and up-linking data after a P-8 maritime patrol aircraft departed station.

In one scenario, a USV obtained an ESM electronic support measures bearing on a surface target, passed the locating data to the information warfare commander, who passed it to the surface warfare commander, who used a swarm drone attack against the target, a surface vessel.

During one event, a submarine was able to launch and recover an IVER-4 UUV using a torpedo tube.

"Being able to do that without divers [is] reducing a ton of risk for our divers to have to go recover … was a big win," Gaucher said.

He also said the IVER-4 was able to conduct its own surveillance and reconnaissance and intelligence preparation

of the battlespace.

“We were also able to deliver some kinetic effects in support of undersea and seabed warfare,” he said.

Control of unmanned systems during the IBP was conducted variously from a shore site, from ships at sea, or autonomously.

“I know that unmanned can proved me video from overhead,” Gaucher said. “I know I can put a towed array sensor on a medium-sized unmanned surface vessel, and I can control it from the shore for theater ASW. … I know that I can operate a system in and out of the torpedo tube of a submarine to support seabed warfare.”

“From a [Pacific Fleet] perspective, we were very pleased about how the Integrated Battle Problem came out, in particular with our ability to integrate unmanned [systems] into that battle problem in a contested environment,” Gaucher said, noting that 29 different unmanned technologies were part of the IBP, with about 50% surface, 30% subsurface, and 20% above the surface.

Gaucher stressed that goals for the IPB included using unmanned systems to avoid putting personnel in harm’s way and to improve targeting “so we get a better solution when we launch.”

Gerald R. Ford Successfully Completes Combat Systems

Ship’s Qualification Trials

An evolved sea sparrow missile (ESSM) launches from one of USS Gerald R. Ford’s (CVN 78) weapons sponsons during combat

systems ship qualification trials (CSSQT), April 16, 2021. CSSQT is a Naval Sea Systems Command requirement to verify that ship personnel can operate and maintain their combat systems in a safe and effective manner. Ford is underway in the Atlantic Ocean conducting its final independent steaming event of post-delivery tests and trials. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Zachary Melvin*
ATLANTIC OCEAN – Sailors aboard the aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) successfully completed Combat Systems Ship's Qualification Trials (CSSQT) April 17, representing a major milestone in validating the ship's capability to defend itself and the crew, the ship's public affairs officer said in an April 24 release.

The trials, which commenced in February, consisted of five phases. The completion of the final phase, 2C, and CSSQT overall, is the culmination of years of planning, training, ingenuity and thousands of working hours for the ship's current and previous crews.

"I could not be more proud of our Sailors and their historic accomplishment," said Capt. Paul Lanzilotta, Ford's commanding officer. "CSSQT was a live-fire, hands-on opportunity to prove the self-defense capability of this fine warship. We always intend to use our embarked air wing to influence our adversaries at great ranges from the ship, but if they're able to get a shot at us, this event has shown our crew the formidable nature of our organic weapons."

According to ship's CSSQT project officer, Larry Daugherty, phase 2C was the "prove it" phase for the ship, which had already completed multiple detect-to-engage scenarios with live aircraft. In 2C, Ford faced off against rocket propelled drones capable of speeds in excess of 600 miles per hour; towed drone units (TDUs) that simulate rockets; and remote controlled, high-speed maneuvering surface targets (HSMST).

The crew countered, relying on their skills and training to operate Ford's advanced defense systems. They used the rolling

airframe missile (RAM) launchers, firing off RIM-116 missiles; the NATO launchers to fire the evolved sea sparrow missiles (ESSM); and the Mk-15 Phalanx Close-In Weapon System (CIWS) to fire armor-piercing tungsten bullets at 4,500 rounds per minute.

“The crew crushed it, firing off four missiles [two RIM-116 and two ESSM], and all of them were conducted with precision control by combat direction center (CDC) watch teams, they executed perfectly,” said Daugherty. “All command and control decisions were made correctly, and the [systems] were engaged when they were supposed to be engaged and everything went out on time.”

The ship’s defense missiles engaged the drones and CIWS took out the TDUs and HSMSTs. All three TDUs were destroyed, and two of those TDUs were ripped to shreds, according to Daugherty. All three HSMSTs were destroyed as well.

“Those Sailors not only took out the first two HSMSTs, they punched holes in them, set them on fire, and they both sank,” said Daugherty. “On the third one, the CIWS operator was so good that he actually hit the target further out than the weapon system’s maximum effective range and put it DIW [dead in the water].”

As the first crew to fire Ford’s missiles and complete this mission, it is a huge accomplishment, according to Chief Warrant Officer 2 Todd Williamson, Ford’s fire control officer, and it began with the on-load of the missiles.

“Getting missiles transported and loaded onto a ship is a big movement that requires national coordination between multiple entities,” said Williamson. “The ship’s fire controlmen and Weapons Department were the backbone of the handling evolution, while Ford’s Aviation Intermediate Maintenance Department provided material handling equipment readiness support. Our ISEA [In-Service Engineering Agents] were also

on-hand to provide oversight.”

The first few days of the nearly week-long exercises for 2C were some of the most challenging, according to Williamson. “For Weapons Department and Combat Systems Department, it was two 18-hour back-to-back days just to get set-up and complete telemetry checks,” he said.

The telemetry checks provide the capability to record the flight performance characteristics and fusing of RAM and ESSM missiles to ensure they are capable of hitting their intended targets, according to Daugherty.

There were other system checks, system and equipment tuning, ordnance uploads, preventative maintenance checks and casualty repairs, which collectively made for an extremely complex series of exercises. According to Fire Controlman 2nd Class Douglas Huyge, who has been aboard Ford for two years, his team was up for the challenge.

“I am 100% impressed with the way the division worked together to achieve this goal,” said Huyge. “People who are in leadership positions dream of dream-teams like this, we worked hard to get here and we executed the mission.”

CSSQT is the culminating combat systems test of Ford’s 18-month post-delivery test and trials (PDT&T) phase of operations. Following PDT&T this month, Ford will commence preparations for Full Ship Shock Trials, scheduled to occur during the summer, to validate the ability of new construction ships to carry out assigned missions and evaluate operational survivability after exposure to an underwater shock.

“[CSSQT] was probably the single-handed greatest feeling I’ve felt on this ship so far,” said Huyge, describing how he felt watching the live-fire evolution in CDC, after many years of hard work. “I would say what I felt was fulfillment. It was a high level of fulfillment.”

USS Gerald R. Ford is a first-in-class aircraft carrier, and the first new aircraft carrier designed in more than 40 years. The ship is underway for Independent Steaming Event 18 (ISE 18), as part of her PDT&T phase of operations.

Coast Guard Decommissions Service's Final High-Endurance Cutter

Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Karl L. Schultz, Vice Adm. Linda Fagan, and Capt. Riley Gatewood, hold a pennant during the Coast Guard Cutter Douglas Munro (WHEC 724) decommissioning ceremony in Kodiak, Alaska, on April 24, 2021. In 1998, the cutter interdicted over 11.5 tons of cocaine on a Mexican flagged vessel, the Xolesuientle, to this day one of the

largest single drug seizures in Coast Guard history. *COAST GUARD / Petty Officer 3rd Class Janessa Warschkow*
KODIAK, Alaska – The Coast Guard Cutter Douglas Munro (WHEC 724) was decommissioned during a ceremony Saturday at Coast Guard Base Kodiak and presided over by Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Karl Schultz, the Coast Guard Pacific Area said in an April 24 release.

The Douglas Munro was the Coast Guard's last remaining 378-foot Hamilton-class high-endurance cutter. The fleet of high-endurance cutters is being replaced by 418-foot Legend-class national security cutters, which serve as the Coast Guard's primary long-range asset.

Commissioned in 1971, Douglas Munro was the tenth of 12 high-endurance cutters built for long-range, high-endurance missions, including maritime security roles, drug interdiction, illegal migrant interception and fisheries patrols.

The cutter was named after Signalman 1st Class Douglas Albert Munro, who was awarded the Medal of Honor for acts of extraordinary heroism during World War II.

Munro was the officer-in-charge of an eight-craft amphibious landing force during the Guadalcanal Campaign and used his landing craft and its .30 caliber machine gun to shield and protect several hundred Marines who were under heavy enemy fire. He was mortally wounded during this effort, but his actions allowed for the Marines to be extracted by other landing craft. For these actions Munro was posthumously bestowed the Medal of Honor, making him the only person to receive the medal for actions performed during service in the Coast Guard.

"Today we say thank you and goodbye to the end of an era – an era of nearly 50 years when high endurance cutters took our

service's racing stripe around the globe, modeling the maritime rules-based order," said Schultz during the ceremony. "Today we say thank you and goodbye to cutter Douglas Munro – the first cutter to be named after Coast Guard hero – Signalman First Class Douglas Munro."

Over the past 49-years of distinguished service, Douglas Munro's crews have served in a multitude of domestic and international theaters including the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska, Persian Gulf and Horn of Africa, and Southeast Asia and the Eastern Pacific. The cutters proud legacy of honorable service to the nation began in the early 1970s patrolling Ocean Stations Delta, Bravo and November, providing weather data to trans-Pacific flights, supporting oceanographic research missions and performing search-and-rescue operations.

The crew of Douglas Munro also patrolled the Pacific for decades as an enforcer of fisheries regulations. In 1998, Douglas Munro's crew discovered and seized over 11.5 tons of cocaine from a Mexican flagged vessel, the Xolesuientle, in what remains to this day one of the largest single drug seizures in Coast Guard history. The following year, Douglas Munro's crew seized the motor vessel Wing Fung Lung, which was attempting to transport 259 illegal Chinese migrants to the United States.

In early 2005, at the beginning of a six-month, 37,000 mile global circumnavigation that included support to Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom, the crew of Douglas Munro was diverted to render assistance to countries affected by the Indian Ocean tsunami on December 26, 2004.

The legacy of Douglas Munro was epitomized on March 23, 2008 when the cutter's crew and their embarked MH-65 Aviation Detachment worked with a forward deployed Air Station Kodiak MH-60 helicopter crew to recover 20 survivors from the

fishing vessel Alaska Ranger that sank in the Bering Sea early that morning. The 17th Coast Guard District commander at the time of the rescue, Rear Adm. Arthur Brooks, declared it “One of the greatest search and rescue efforts in modern history.”

“Serving as the final crew aboard the Coast Guard Cutter Douglas Munro, the last 378-foot cutter in the Coast Guard has been an exciting and rewarding experience for myself and my shipmates,” said Capt. Riley Gatewood, commanding officer of the Douglas Munro. “During my time aboard I have witnessed the sacrifices of the crew as they spent time away from their loved ones in service to their country. This dedication echoes the hard work put forth by our predecessors during the cutter’s 49-years of service and embodies the ships motto ‘Honoring the past by serving the present.’ While Coast Guard Cutter Douglas Munro is being decommissioned, I know that the legacy and service of Signalman 1st Class Douglas Albert Munro lives on in the Coast Guard men and women serving around the world today, and in the national security cutter Munro that continues to bear his name.”

Cutter Bear Returns Home After Interdicting $140+ Million of Illicit Drugs

Coast Guard Cutter Bear personnel offload approximately 2,300 lbs of cocaine worth more than $43.7 million at Port Everglades in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, April 20, 2021. On April 1, 2020, U.S. Southern Command began what was then known as Enhanced Counter Narcotics (CN) Operations in the Western Hemisphere to increase the disruption of drugs. *U.S. COAST GUARD photo by Chief Petty Officer Charly Tautfest*

PORTSMOUTH, Va. – The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Bear (WMEC 901) returned home to Portsmouth Sunday following an 86-day counter-drug patrol in the Eastern Pacific Ocean, the Coast Guard 5th District said in an April 26 release.

The Bear's crew interdicted three vessels, seized approximately 8,158 pounds of cocaine, two pounds of methamphetamines, as well as marijuana, worth a combined total of over $140 million, and detained 12 suspected drug smugglers.

The Bear's crew also coordinated operations with the U.S.

Coast Guard's Tactical Law Enforcement Team South Law Enforcement Detachment (LEDET-108), who were deployed aboard the HMCS Saskatoon, a Kingston-class coastal defense vessel from the Canadian Navy. The collaboration supported LEDET-108's seizure of an additional 2,866 pounds of cocaine and the detention of three suspected smugglers.

A flight crew and aviation detachment from the Coast Guard's Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron (HITRON), deployed aboard the Bear for the patrol. HITRON crews specialize in airborne use of force, and are based out of Jacksonville, Florida. The crew of the Bear worked in preparation for the counter-narcotics mission, partaking in numerous flight operations to recertify the flight crew and enhance crew proficiency in shipboard helicopter operations and non-complaint vessel training.

The Bear's crew departed Portsmouth to conduct joint training exercises with the U.S. Navy on January 31. The Bear supported the Navy's training exercise while operating off the coast of Virginia and the Carolinas, and the crew took advantage of the unique opportunity to become more proficient at wartime steaming.

"I am extremely proud of this crew and honored to be their commanding officer," said Cmdr. Jeff Ferlauto, the Bear's commanding officer. "It's been an extremely successful deployment and the crew met each challenge head-on. Since our initial transit through the Panama Canal into the Eastern Pacific, this crew dominated! As we get ready for the home stretch, I want to personally thank all the families and friends for their continued support. I realize that our personal lives and our devotion to duty are in constant tension. We have chosen to serve our country and execute missions that take us far from home and require extended absences from our loved ones."

The Bear is a 270-foot medium-endurance cutter homeported in

Portsmouth.