Coast Guard conducts maritime law enforcement alongside Tongan Royal Navy

NUKU'ALOFA, Tonga – The crew of U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Oliver Berry (WPC 1126) concluded bilateral maritime law enforcement operations alongside Tonga on Wednesday.

The Oliver Berry crew visited Tonga as part of their ongoing Operation Blue Pacific patrol – a multi-mission Coast Guard endeavor to promote regional security and stability throughout the Pacific.

The Coast Guard partnered with members of the Tongan Royal Navy to conduct bilateral maritime law enforcement operations. During these operations, Coast Guard personnel assisted Tongan Royal Navy officers in carrying out vessel boardings and other maritime law enforcement activities. Tongan Royal Navy officers retained primary law enforcement authority and made all determinations regarding vessel targeting, identification of violations, and any resulting penalties or enforcement actions.

The enduring partnership between the United States and the Kingdom of Tonga enhances mutual technical expertise to address evolving maritime security threats. By strengthening regional partnerships to deter illegal resource exploitation and counter malign activities, bilateral maritime law enforcement boardings help protect the Pacific's invaluable ocean resources.

"Working alongside the Tongan Royal Navy under our bilateral agreement is a powerful testament to our commitment to regional security," said Lt. Bennett Aneralla, commanding officer of the Oliver Berry. "These bilateral boardings

demonstrate our shared resolve to protect Tonga’s sovereign waters from illicit activity, ensuring the long-term health and security of the greater Blue Pacific.”

While also in Nuku’alofa, the Oliver Berry crew attended the retirement ceremony for the Deputy Chief of Defence of the Tongan Royal Navy, presenting congratulatory Flag Letters on behalf of the Coast Guard Oceania District Commander, RADM Arguin, for Brigadier Lord Fielakepa and Colonel ‘Aholelei’s successful careers. Additionally, the cutter’s crew participated in a friendly scrimmage of flag football with local students.

Oliver Berry is a 154-foot Fast Response Cutter with a 24-person crew and was the 24th sentinel-class cutter built in its series. It is the first of its class to be homeported in Honolulu. The Oliver Berry was designed for various missions crucial to protecting the Pacific region.

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