Coast Guard crew offloads $76 million worth of narcotics in San Diego



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SAN DIEGO – The Coast Guard Cutter Alert (WMEC 630) crew offloaded more than 5,776 pounds of cocaine worth more than $76 million, Friday, in San Diego.

The interdiction occurred in international waters in the Eastern Pacific Ocean off the coasts of Central and South

America in May.

“Preventing these drugs from reaching our country not only saves lives, but reduces violence, corruption and instability,” said Rear Adm. Andrew Sugimoto, commander, Coast Guard Eleventh District. “I commend the Alert’s crew for their hard work and continued efforts to ensure the illegal and dangerous process of bringing drugs into this country is put to a stop.”

Numerous U.S. agencies from the Departments of Defense, Justice and Homeland Security cooperate in the effort to combat transnational organized crime. The Coast Guard, Customs and Border Protection, FBI, Drug Enforcement Administration, and Immigration and Customs Enforcement, along with allied and international partner agencies, play a role in counter narcotic operations.

“Alert’s crew and attached aviation detachment overcame numerous challenges to flawlessly execute our assigned counternarcotics patrol,” said Cmdr. Matthew Kolodica, commanding officer of the Alert. “I am extremely impressed with the crew’s resiliency and unwavering dedication to safe, efficient, mission execution. Stopping $76 million worth of narcotics from reaching American soil is something we can all be proud of, and I’m truly honored to lead such a fine team.”

The fight against drug cartels in the Eastern Pacific Ocean requires unity of effort in all phases from detection, monitoring, and interdictions, to criminal prosecutions by international partners and U.S. Attorneys’ Offices in districts across the nation. The law enforcement phase of counter-smuggling operations in the Eastern Pacific Ocean is conducted under the authority of the Eleventh Coast Guard District, headquartered in Alameda. The interdictions, including the actual boardings, are led and conducted by members of the U.S. Coast Guard.

The Alert is a United States Coast Guard 210-foot medium endurance cutter and is the fourth cutter to carry the namesake. Coast Guard missions take the Alert throughout the Pacific Ocean, from the maritime boundary line between Russia and the United States and the coastal waters off Washington, Oregon, and California to the waters off the Central and South American coasts.