Coast Guard Cutter Alert Returns Home to Astoria for the Last Time



By U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Area, Feb. 26, 2024

ASTORIA, Ore. – The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Alert (WMEC 630) and its crew returned to their homeport, Monday, after a 59-day counter-narcotics patrol in the Eastern Pacific Ocean.

This patrol is scheduled to be the cutter's last patrol out of its current homeport of Astoria, Oregon.

During the patrol, the Alert's embarked helicopter crew from, the Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron (HITRON), based out of Jacksonville, Florida, sighted a suspected "go-fast" vessel driving on a northerly course and alerted the cutters crew. The crew responded and launched both of its small-boat pursuit teams. Due to the vessel's refusal to stop when

ordered, the HITRON helicopter disabled the engines of the “go-fast” and monitored until the pursuit crew gained control of the vessel. Simultaneously, the second small boat team recovered dozens of bales of cocaine jettisoned into the ocean by the suspected smugglers. The crew then worked tirelessly through the night to haul in and account for all 4,950 kg of cocaine, valued at more than $143 million.

The interdiction is among the Coast Guard’s largest single interdictions in the Eastern Pacific and represents a major blow to the criminal organizations attempting to smuggle illicit narcotics through the maritime domain. Additionally, it serves as the capstone in Alert’s time in Coast Guard Pacific Area, as the cutter will shift homeport in June to be stationed in Cape Canaveral, Florida as part of the larger Coast Guard Force Alignment Initiative.

“The crew worked in the margins, and we won big in the margins,” said Cmdr. Lee Crusius, commanding officer Coast Guard Cutter Alert. “The return on investment from the Coast Guard to the American people continues to be demonstrated by our ability to project capabilities and rule of law within the maritime domain. Day in and day out, the women and men of our service are doing important business, protecting vital international interests from those who wish to subvert order.”

The smuggling of cocaine represents a large threat to not only the health of nations and rule of law, but destruction of fragile ecosystems in its manufacturing and movement.

The cutter Alert was commissioned in 1969 and is the newest of three 210-foot Reliance-class Medium Endurance cutters stationed on the West Coast. It performs a variety of missions to protect Americans and American interests in the Northern and Eastern Pacific Ocean.