

# Coast Guard Cutter Bear returns home after seizing more than \$63 million in illicit drugs during Eastern Pacific Ocean patrol



A small boat crew from the Coast Guard Cutter Bear (WMEC 901) sinks a drug-smuggling vessel after a successful interdiction in the Eastern Pacific Ocean, May 11, 2026. Due to the vessel's poor seaworthiness and lack of towing points, the Coast Guard destroyed the ship to prevent it from becoming a hazard to navigation. (U.S. Coast Guard photo)

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PORTSMOUTH, Va. – The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Bear (WMEC 901) returned to their home port in Portsmouth, Tuesday, after a 74-day deployment in support of Operation Pacific

Viper, a Coast Guard counter-drug campaign in the Eastern Pacific Ocean.

The Bear's crew, along with an embarked MH-65 Dolphin helicopter aviation detachment from the Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron, deployed in support of Joint Interagency Task Force – South and conducted counter-drug missions in the Eastern Pacific.

While at sea, Bear's crew successfully seized more than \$63 million in illicit drugs, disrupted transnational criminal organizations alongside partner nations and responded to a fishing vessel in distress.

On Jun. 10, Bear worked alongside the Colombian Navy to rescue three fishermen stranded at sea. After receiving the initial report of a fishing vessel disabled 100 miles offshore with a medical emergency on board, Bear launched its embarked helicopter and small boat to locate the fishermen and render aid. Once on scene, the boat crew was able to treat the survivors who had been stranded for three days, suffering from deprivation and other injuries.

In the following 36 hours, Bear's crew intercepted three go-fast vessels and recovered a bale at sea, preventing transport of nearly six tons of illicit narcotics.

On June 11, Bear's crew detected a go-fast vessel, and the embarked Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron aircrew employed airborne use-of-force tactics. Bear's boarding team interdicted and boarded the vessel, seizing approximately 4,000 pounds of marijuana.

On June 12, Bear's crew detected two go-fast vessels, and the embarked HITRON aircrew employed airborne use-of-force tactics to stop both vessels. Bear's boarding teams interdicted and boarded the vessels, seizing approximately 7,660 pounds of

cocaine.

On June 13, Bear's crew recovered a bale in the Eastern Pacific Ocean containing approximately 60 pounds of cocaine.

"I could not be prouder of this crew for a job exceptionally well done," said Cmdr. Jorell Webb, commanding officer of Bear. "The definitive success of this deployment is a testament to the crew's unwavering professionalism and outstanding coordination with our interagency partners. By operating as a team, we disrupted significant shipments of illicit narcotics and the transnational criminal networks who smuggle them."

Operation Pacific Viper is a major ongoing maritime surge operation launched in early August of 2025 by the U.S. Coast Guard in close coordination with the U.S. Navy and international allies. Its primary mission is to aggressively disrupt transnational criminal organizations, stop drug cartels and halt human smuggling in the Eastern Pacific Ocean prior to illicit shipments reaching American shores.

Commissioned in 1983, Bear is a 270-foot, Famous-class medium endurance cutter. The cutter's primary missions include counter-drug and alien interdiction operations, enforcement of federal fishery laws, and search and rescue operations in support of Coast Guard missions throughout the Western Hemisphere. The cutter falls under the command of U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area, which is also based in Portsmouth.