Coast Guard Cutter Bertholf Returns Home After 3-Month Patrol



Fireman Jose Castro-Acosta salutes during morning colors during a drug offload from Coast Guard Cutter Bertholf in San Diego, Sep. 10. 2020. The narcotics, worth an estimated $390 million, were seized in international waters of the Eastern Pacific Ocean between May and August 2020. U.S. Coast Guard / Petty Officer 2nd Class Travis Magee

ALAMEDA, Calif. – The crew aboard the Coast Guard Cutter Bertholf (WMSL 750) returned home to Alameda, California, Oct. 3 following a three-month, 15,000-mile, multi-mission patrol, the Coast Guard Pacific Area said in a release.

Bertholf's crew spent more than 50 days patrolling the Eastern Pacific Ocean conducting a counter-narcotics mission, resulting in the apprehension of 6,700 pounds of cocaine with an estimated wholesale value of more than $115 million.

The crew also patrolled over 3,000 square nautical miles of Ecuadorian and international waters conducting a joint patrol with the Ecuadorian navy to detect and deter potential Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing in the vicinity of the Galapagos Islands. Bertholf and the Ecuadorian naval vessel LAE Isla San Cristobal (LG-30), provided persistent presence and surveillance of fishing activity throughout the region during the week-long mission.

The joint operation highlights a significant Coast Guard partnership with a South American country to detect, deter and ensure adherence to international maritime norms for fishing.

“It was a unique opportunity to sail together with the Ecuadorian navy, and we were impressed by their professionalism and dedication to the fight against illegal fishing,” said Capt. Brian Anderson, Bertholf’s commanding officer. “This joint operation demonstrates the effectiveness and importance of our international partnerships.”

Following the two month multi-mission Eastern Pacific patrol, Bertholf offloaded more than 26,000 pounds of cocaine Sept. 10 in San Diego; an accumulation from multiple U.S. ships conducting counter narcotic operations in the Eastern Pacific.

Bertholf’s crew entered a three-week long Tailored Ship Training Assessment (TSTA) in San Diego following their patrol. TSTA is a comprehensive evaluation on the crew’s capabilities to respond to a wide-range of scenarios from rescuing a man overboard to battling a fire on the ship.

“I’m extremely proud of the hard work and dedication displayed by the men and women of the Coast Guard Cutter Bertholf, especially in this current environment,” said Anderson. “The crew adapted and implemented new protocols in response to the added risk of COVID-19 exposure in the course of operations. They remained focused on what they needed to do to keep each other safe and effectively accomplish the mission of keeping these drugs off our streets, which will save countless lives.”

To ensure the safety of Bertholf’s crew deploying during the COVID-19 global pandemic, the crew conducted pre-deployment COVID-19 testing, followed by a 14-day quarantine and a second round of testing. The crew maintained social distancing until the results of the second test came back negative. Throughout their patrol, Bertholf’s crew maintained strict health precautions during all interactions with the public and during boardings, including wearing N95 respirators and

undergoing intensive decontamination procedures following the completion of each boarding.

Commissioned in 2008, Bertholf was the Coast Guard’s first 418-foot Legend-class national security cutters built, and one of four homeported in Alameda. National security cutters have a crew of more than 150 and are among the largest and most technologically sophisticated vessels in the Coast Guard’s fleet. The cutters can operate globally in the most demanding open ocean environments, from the North Pacific’s hazardous fishing grounds to the Eastern Pacific’s vast approaches, where its crews battle transnational organized crime networks.