Coast Guard Cutter James Conducts Counter-Drug Patrol in Eastern Pacific Ocean



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NORTH CHARLESTON, S.C. – The crew of the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter James (WMSL 754) returned to their home port in Charleston, Wednesday, following a 92-day deployment conducting counter-narcotics operations in the Eastern Pacific Ocean in support of **Operation Pacific Viper**.

During the patrol, the James crew interdicted over 46,500 pounds of narcotics valued at nearly $350 million. The James crew conducted nine interdictions and detained 33 suspected drug traffickers. The patrol focused on disrupting illegal

narcotics smuggling in collaboration with international partners.

The James crew worked alongside international partners including Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, and Colombia. The collaboration included multiple partner nation transfers.

To support maritime governance and strengthen international relations, the James crew transferred 22 detainees pier side in Manta, Ecuador, prior to a visit from Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem.

The James crew worked with the Costa Rican coast guard and national police to transfer two Colombian detainees and offload approximately 9,500 pounds of cocaine in Golfito, Costa Rica. During the visit, James hosted Costa Rican Minister of Security Mario Zamora Cordero.

“I am exceptionally thankful and proud of this crew’s dedication,” said Capt. Thomas Rodzewicz, commanding officer of the James. “Time away from family and missed holidays is never a small sacrifice, but the crew’s time and commitment to combatting narco-terrorism and protecting our nation from illicit drugs crossing our borders are highlighted by the success of this patrol.”

The James crew offloaded more than 26,000 pounds of cocaine and 500 pounds of marijuana in Port Everglades, Florida, Monday, before heading home.

Since 2017, Coast Guard Cutter James crewmembers have interdicted 104 shipments totaling 285,140 pounds of cocaine worth $2.11 billion wholesale and 34,539 pounds of marijuana worth $27.8 million wholesale.

James is one of four 418-foot Legend-class national security cutters homeported in Charleston under U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area Command. The cutter’s primary missions are counter-drug operations and defense readiness.

Detecting and interdicting narco-terrorism on the high seas involves significant interagency and international coordination. U.S. Southern Command’s Joint Interagency Task Force-South, based in Key West, Florida, detects and monitors both aerial and maritime transit of illegal drugs. Once interdiction becomes imminent, the law enforcement phase of the operation begins, and control of the operation shifts to the U.S. Coast Guard throughout the interdiction and apprehension. Interdictions in the Eastern Pacific Ocean are performed by members of the U.S. Coast Guard under the authority and control of the Coast Guard’s Southwest District, headquartered in Alameda, California.

The Coast Guard is the United States’ lead federal agency for maritime drug interdiction.