

Coast Guard Cutter James Honored by White House at United States Interdiction Coordinator Awards Ceremony



Coast Guard Cutter James (WMSL 754) personnel pose for a photo with other law enforcement agency officials, July 19, at the White House in Washington, D.C. for the annual United States Interdiction Coordinator Awards. James' crew was recognized with the top maritime interdiction during the awards ceremony. (Photo courtesy of the White House)

To view the full event, click [here](#).

From Headquarters, U.S. Coast Guard, 26 July 2024

WASHINGTON – The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter James (WMSL 754) was honored at the White House during the United States Interdiction Coordinator Awards Ceremony on July 19.

The annual event, held by the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), recognized the exceptional contributions and achievements of various law enforcement entities in drug interdiction efforts. James' crew was recognized for top maritime interdiction.

Amidst heavy seas on the afternoon of Sept. 11, 2023, a junior watchstander noticed what appeared to be the wake of a go-fast vessel approximately 10 nautical miles off James' bow. The cutter set its go-fast response bill, spurring the entirety of James' crew in motion to prepare for a counter-drug pursuit. James used an operational procedure agreed upon with Ecuador that allowed law enforcement teams to embark the foreign-flagged vessel, where they found 73 bales of cocaine. Following the successful seizure of 3,863 pounds of cocaine and the detention of three suspected narcotraffickers, James coordinated an at-sea transfer of the detainees and contraband with Ecuador to enable home country prosecution and strengthen a key partnership.

To successfully spot a target of interest on the high seas without positive identification from aerial assets or radar is known as a cold hit. Within the realm of maritime interdiction, cold hits are the equivalent of finding the proverbial needle in a haystack, a complex difficult task made more challenging by the heavy seas and gray skies that limited visibility on that day. In this case, the cold hit detection of the go-fast vessel was made by the lookout, one of James' most junior crewmembers, who had been in the Coast Guard for only six months. Her initial cold hit spurred the rest of the crew and teams into action.

During the ceremony, ONDCP Director Dr. Rahul Gupta, commended the crew of James for their outstanding service and unwavering commitment to protecting the nation's borders and safeguarding the lives of countless Americans. The cutter's achievements are a testament to the Coast Guard's enduring legacy of excellence in maritime law enforcement and drug

interdiction.

“It was an honor to receive this award on behalf of the entire James crew,” said Capt. Donald Terkanian, commanding officer of James. “Our crew’s exceptional efforts disrupted illicit drug trafficking, deprived transnational criminal organizations of millions of dollars in revenue, apprehended suspected traffickers, strengthened a key partnership, and helped save lives by preventing drugs from reaching the streets.”

James is a 418-foot, Legend-class national security cutter, homeported in North Charleston, South Carolina. The cutter’s primary missions are counter-drug operations and defense readiness. James falls under the command of the Coast Guard Atlantic Area in Portsmouth, Virginia. Atlantic Area oversees all Coast Guard operations east of the Rocky Mountains to the Arabian Gulf. In addition to surge operations, Atlantic Area also allocates ships to deploy to the Caribbean Sea, Eastern Pacific Ocean, and South Atlantic Ocean to combat transnational organized crime and illicit maritime activity.

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