Coast Guard Cutter James Returns Home from 62-Day Counter-Drug Patrol



An MH-65 Dolphin helicopter lands on the flight deck of the Coast Guard cutter James while conducting hurricane relief operations in the Caribbean on Sept. 6. U.S. Coast Guard

CHARLESTON, S.C. – The Coast Guard cutter James returned to Charleston on Oct. 31 following a 62-day counter-drug patrol in support of Operation Martillo in the eastern Pacific Ocean, the Coast Guard's 7th District said in a release.

During their patrol, the James' crew, along with members from Tactical Law Enforcement Team-South, Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron, and multiple partner agencies, contributed to the interdiction of seven drug-smuggling vessels and were responsible for the seizure of more than 9,000 pounds of cocaine and 4,085 pounds of marijuana bound for the United States.

The James' crew offloaded more than 28,000 pounds of seized cocaine and 11,000 pounds of seized marijuana on Oct. 28 at Port Everglades in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. The contraband was seized by multiple Coast Guard units in the eastern Pacific and Caribbean and has a wholesale value of more than $377.1 million.

"The teamwork, dedication and bias for action exhibited by this crew and other Coast Guard vessel crews represent how the Coast Guard protects this nation from threats delivered by sea, and I could not be prouder of them," said Capt. Jeffrey Randall, James' commanding officer.



The Coast Guard cutter James conducts Hurricane Dorian relief

operations alongside the cutter Paul Clark in the Caribbean on Sept. 6. U.S. Coast Guard

In addition to interdicting drug-smuggling vessels, the James assumed the role of commander, Task Force Bahamas, in the wake of Hurricane Dorian, the strongest Category 5 hurricane to make landfall in the Bahamas. The James directed eight cutters and 12 helicopters in response to search-and-rescue and medevac calls by injured and stranded inhabitants and coordinated evaluations of 25 ports and their associated infrastructure.

The James is one of two 418-foot national security cutters (NSC) homeported in Charleston. With its command, control, communication, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance equipment, the NSC is the most technologically advanced ship in the Coast Guard's fleet. NSCs are equipped with state-of-the-art small assets to include a small unmanned aircraft system which can expand the surveillance range of a surface asset like the James.

"From mission planning to risk mitigation, the capability offered by a small shipboard based unmanned aerial system extends our visual range to enhance our ability to execute a diverse mission set," said Lt. Cmdr. Kevin Connell, operations officer for the James.