Coast Guard Cutter Spencer Returns to Portsmouth after Patrolling Eastern Pacific



The crew of a small boat from Coast Guard Cutter Spencer conducting maneuvers with a Coast Guard HITRON helicopter off the coast of Honduras. *U.S. COAST GUARD / Chief Petty Officer Katharine Ingham*

PORTSMOUTH, Va. – The crew of U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Spencer returned to its homeport in Portsmouth, Virginia after a 78-day patrol off the shores of Central America, the Coast Guard 5th District said June 7.

USCGC Spencer departed Portsmouth Feb. 12 and headed south, making a stop in Mayport, Florida, to bring aboard a Coast Guard Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron crew. From Mayport, the medium endurance cutter steamed to Honduran territorial seas and conducted tactical demonstrations with members of the Honduran Naval Special Forces.

After transiting through the Panama Canal, USCGC Spencer

conducted operations in the Eastern Pacific ocean with the objective of disrupting illicit narcotics trafficking. Law enforcement teams from USCGC Spencer successfully interdicted a go-fast vessel with over 300 kilograms of cocaine and 1,000 pounds of marijuana. Later during the patrol, the embarked HITRON element spotted another smuggling vessel near USCGC Spencer's location. The boat caught on fire and USCGC Spencer's crew recovered three survivors along with several bales of cocaine that were thrown off the boat shortly before it sank. USCGC Spencer also assisted Costa Rican authorities in the detention of six suspected narco-traffickers who were caught smuggling laundered money on a fishing vessel in the region.

Transnational criminal organizations pose a serious threat to the national security of the United States and are funded primarily through the trade of illicit narcotics. While in the Pacific theater, USCGC Spencer's crew worked with regional law enforcement authorities to deter the flow of contraband to the United States and to hold lawbreakers accountable.

"We were able to provide effective coverage of known drug smuggling routes alongside our domestic and foreign partners during this patrol," said Cmdr. Corey Kerns, commanding officer of USCGC Spencer. "I am grateful that we were able to support the counter narcotics mission in the Eastern Pacific and most importantly that everyone returned home safely. These deployments are undoubtedly the most challenging for our members due to their stressful operational tempo and distance from home. The crew demonstrated incredible perseverance day in and day out, worked as a team, and had fun along the way, which made the experience meaningful and memorable for us all."

USCGC Spencer is a 270-foot medium-endurance cutter with a 100-person crew complement.