

Coast Guard Cutter Tampa Returns Home Following 57-day Caribbean Patrol



Fireman Lukas Kuehne, a crewmember aboard the Coast Guard Cutter Tampa, helps move drugs during a contraband transfer aboard the cutter. The cutter crew conducted a 57-day counter-drug and migrant interdiction operations patrol. U.S. Coast Guard

PORTSMOUTH, Va. – The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Tampa returned to their homeport in Portsmouth on Dec. 12, after a 57-day counter-drug and migrant interdiction operations patrol, the Coast Guard 5th District said in a release.

Patrolling known drug trafficking areas throughout the Caribbean and working with partner agencies and maritime patrol aircraft, the Tampa crew interdicted a vessel carrying approximately 170 pounds of cocaine worth \$1.95 million.

Additionally, in a joint operation with various law enforcement agency partners, the Tampa assisted the Coast Guard Cutter Richard Dixon, homeported in San Juan, Puerto Rico, with the interdiction of two fishing vessels, with 26 alleged smugglers, suspected of engaging in drug trafficking.

The Tampa's efforts to combat drug smuggling in the Caribbean was part of Operation Unified Resolve, a larger effort to increase regional stability and undermine the influence of transnational criminal organizations who routinely attempt to smuggle drugs throughout the region.

"I am exceptionally proud of everything our crew accomplished during this challenging patrol," said Capt. Michael Cilenti, commanding officer of the Tampa. "Through my entire Coast

Guard career, this has been one of the most dynamic patrols I have experienced, and I appreciate the resiliency and adaptability of our crew immensely. Additionally, Tampa's exceptional commitment to readiness and individual accountability allowed us to sail healthy, on time, and ready to execute our assigned missions. Of course, Tampa's operational success would not have been possible without the continuous support and encouragement from our friends and families. Their constant support allowed us to operate through the holiday season, focus on mission excellence and continue to serve our country. We could not be more grateful."

The Tampa crew also conducted migrant interdiction operations mission off the coast of Haiti as part of Operation Southeast Watch. The Tampa frequently patrolled Haitian waters, providing a law enforcement presence and deterrent to potential migrants and embarked an MH-65 Dolphin helicopter aircrew from Coast Guard Air Station Borinquen, Puerto Rico, which was used as an additional asset to patrol Haitian waters for potential migrant vessels.