

Coast Guard, Navy offload more than \$211M worth of cocaine, marijuana in San Diego



The Independence-variant littoral combat ship USS Gabrielle Giffords (LCS 10) with embarked U.S. Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment (LEDET) 407 conducts enhanced counter-narcotics operations, Dec. 5, 2020. Gabrielle Giffords is deployed to the U.S. 4th Fleet area of operations to support Joint Interagency Task Force South's mission, which includes counter illicit drug trafficking in the Caribbean and Eastern Pacific. U.S. Navy photo.

SAN DIEGO — Coast Guard and Navy personnel offloaded approximately 11,400 pounds of cocaine and 9,000 pounds of marijuana Feb. 1, amounting to more than \$211 million from

seizures in international waters of the Eastern Pacific Ocean.

The offload is the result of interdictions made by Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment 407 (LEDET) personnel, who operated aboard the USS Gabrielle Giffords, and three separate Coast Guard cutter crews between October and December.

“When you are covering a drug-smuggling transit zone the size of the continental United States, every ship makes a huge difference,” said Lt. Jonathan Dietrich. “The seamless integration between our Law Enforcement Detachment and the crew of the USS Gabrielle Giffords was a major reason why we were successful in interdicting such a large amount of drugs and prevent them from reaching our streets.”

The total amount of drugs offloaded included the following unit and Coast Guard ships:

- LEDET 407 was responsible for five cases seizing 10,570 pounds of cocaine and 4,100 pounds of marijuana
- The Seneca (WMEC-906) was responsible for one case seizing 350 pounds of cocaine
- The Legare (WMEC-912) was responsible for one case seizing 53 pounds of cocaine and 3,400 pounds of marijuana
- The Spencer (WMEC-905) was responsible for one case seizing 420 pounds of cocaine and 1,450 pounds of marijuana

“The impressive results of the USS Gabrielle Giffords deployment and drug offload represent more than just a local victory of keeping drugs off our streets,” said Rear Admiral Brian Penoyer. “The Coast Guard and the Navy have worked together for years to keep our waters and shores safe from a number of maritime threats, and we are honored to continue that tradition as we look toward the future.”

The Coast Guard narcotics interdiction efforts are aimed at thwarting transnational criminal organizations, which are

fueled by drug trafficking money. Operations like these attack supply networks in Central and South America. The offload highlights the joint impacts that a Coast Guard unit along with the Navy can have, when working together.

On April 1, U.S. Southern Command increased counter-narcotics operations in the Western Hemisphere to disrupt the flow of drugs. Numerous U.S. agencies from the Departments of Defense, Justice, and Homeland Security cooperated in the effort to combat transnational organized crime. The Coast Guard, Navy, Customs and Border Protection, FBI, Drug Enforcement Administration, and Immigration and Customs Enforcement, along with allied and international partner agencies, play a role in counter-drug operations.

The fight against drug cartels in the Eastern Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea requires unity of effort in all phases from detection, monitoring and interdictions, to criminal prosecutions for these interdictions by United States Attorney's Offices from the Middle District of Florida, the Southern District of Florida, and the Southern District of California. The law enforcement phase of counter-smuggling operations in the Eastern Pacific Ocean is conducted under the authority of the 11th Coast Guard District, headquartered in Alameda. The interdictions, including the actual boardings, are led and conducted by members of the U.S. Coast Guard.

LEDET 407 is part of Tactical Law Enforcement Team-South based in Miami. The Seneca is a 270-foot medium endurance cutter homeported in Boston. The Legare is a 270-foot medium endurance cutter homeported in Portsmouth, Virginia. The Spencer is a 270-foot medium endurance cutter homeported in Boston.