Coast Guard Offloads Cocaine, Marijuana Seized in the Caribbean Basin

MIAMI – The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Bernard C. Webber offloaded approximately 3,516 pounds of cocaine and 50 pounds of marijuana worth an estimated wholesale value of over $47 million seized in international waters off the Caribbean Basin from late September to early October, Oct. 16 at Coast Guard Base Miami Beach.

The drugs were seized during the interdictions of three suspected smuggling vessels off the coasts of the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Aruba by the Coast Guard Cutters Donald Horsley, Vigilant and Charles Sexton.

■ Sexton was responsible for one case Oct. 10, seizing an estimated 2700 pounds of cocaine.

■ Donald Horsley was responsible for one case Oct. 4, seizing an estimated 816 pounds of cocaine.

■ Vigilant was responsible for one case Sept. 30, seizing an estimated 50 pounds of marijuana.

“The contraband landed by the Bernard C. Webber crew is a testament to the professional expertise and dedication of U.S. law enforcement agencies and international partners working together to combat the flow of illicit drugs through the Caribbean Region and into the United States,” said Lt. Cmdr. Jeremy Montes, duty enforcement officer at 7th Coast Guard District. “These partnerships are imperative in the identification, intercept, and seizure vessels engaged in illicit trafficking and without the hard work from U.S. and international agencies, these illicit drugs would negatively impact the prosperity and security of the Caribbean Region.”

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 counterdrug operations. The fight against transnational organized crime networks in the Caribbean Basin requires unity of effort in all phases from detection, monitoring, and interdictions, to criminal prosecutions by U.S. Attorneys in districts across the nation.

The Coast Guard increased U.S. and allied presence in the Eastern Pacific Ocean and Caribbean Basin, which are known drug transit zones off of Central and South America, as part of its Western Hemisphere Strategy. During at-sea interdictions in international waters, a suspect vessel is initially detected and monitored by allied, military or law enforcement personnel coordinated by Joint Interagency Task Force-South based in Key West, Florida. The law enforcement phase of counter-smuggling operations in the Caribbean Basin is conducted under the authority of the Coast Guard 7th District, headquartered in Miami, Florida. The interdictions, including the actual boarding, are led and conducted by members of the U.S. Coast Guard.

Charles Sexton is a 154-foot fast-response cutter homeported in Key West, Florida. Bernard C. Webber is a 154-foot fast-response cutter homeported in Miami. Donald Horsley is a 154-foot fast-response cutter homeported in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Vigilant is a 210-foot medium-endurance cutter homeported in Port Canaveral, Florida.