Coast Guard Offloads More Than 11 Tons of Cocaine in San Diego

SAN DIEGO – The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Stratton offloaded more than 11 tons of cocaine seized in international waters off the Eastern Pacific Ocean from late August to mid-September on Oct. 3, the 11th Coast Guard District said in a release.

The drugs were seized during the interdiction of eight suspected smuggling vessels found off the coasts of Mexico, Central and South America by the Coast Guard cutters Stratton, Seneca and Active.

Stratton was responsible for six cases, seizing an estimated 16,473 pounds of cocaine. Seneca was responsible for one case, seizing an estimated 2,954 pounds of cocaine. Active was responsible for one case, seizing an estimated 2,646 pounds of cocaine.

“This offload reflects the outstanding efforts of the Coast Guard and our partner agencies to disrupt and dismantle transnational criminal organizations,” said Capt. Craig J. Wieschhorster, Stratton’s commanding officer. “These interdiction results take hundreds of millions of dollars away from these criminal networks that work to undermine the rule of law in South and Central America, which increases migration pressures on the U.S. southern border. Keeping this product off the streets of America saves lives, and I am very proud of the efforts of my crew.”

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 transnational criminal organizations in the Eastern Pacific 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 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 Eastern Pacific is conducted under the authority of the 11th Coast Guard District, headquartered in Alameda. The interdictions, including the actual boarding’s, are led and conducted by members of the U.S. Coast Guard.

The Stratton is a 418-foot national security cutter homeported in Alameda. The Seneca is a 270-foot medium-endurance cutter homeported in Boston. The Active is a 210-foot medium-endurance cutter homeported in Port Angeles, Washington.