

Coast Guard Offloads More Than \$18M in Illegal Narcotics Interdicted in Caribbean



Bales of cocaine stacked on a pier at Base Miami Beach on August 14, 2024. This offload was the result of drug interdiction efforts by Coast Guard and Navy crews in the international waters of Caribbean. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Nicholas Strasburg)

From U.S. Coast Guard 7th District, Aug. 15, 2024

MIAMI – The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Robert Yered offloaded more than 1,380 pounds of cocaine with an assessed street value of approximately \$18.1 million in Miami Beach, Wednesday.

A U.S. Coast Guard law enforcement detachment deployed aboard a U.S. Navy ship interdicted the illegal drugs in the international waters of the Caribbean Sea while working alongside interagency and international partners.

During the interdiction, the go-fast vessel began taking on water and capsized. A combined Navy and Coast Guard boat crew rescued the three suspected smugglers from the water before recovering bales of jettisoned contraband from the sea.

“I am incredibly proud of the skill and tenacity displayed by our entire team during this interdiction,” said Cmdr. T.J. Orth, commanding officer of USS St. Louis. “This operation was a testament to the capability of our Navy-Coast Guard and interagency teams. The sailors of St. Louis and HSM-50, and Coast Guardsmen of LEDET 105 utilized every resource and capability at their disposal to track and intercept the vessel and then respond to safeguard the lives of the three suspected smugglers.”

The following assets and crews were involved in the interdictions:

- USS St. Louis (LCS 19)

- U.S. Coast Guard Tactical Law Enforcement Team Pacific (PAC-TACLET) Law Enforcement Detachment (LEDET) 105

- U.S. Navy Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron 50 (HSM-50) Detachment 4

- Joint Interagency Task Force South (JIATF-South)

The three suspected smugglers will face prosecution in federal courts by the U.S. Department of Justice.

Detecting and interdicting illicit drug traffickers on the high seas involves significant interagency and international coordination. The Joint Interagency Task Force South in Key West, Florida conducts the detection and monitoring of aerial and maritime transit of illegal drugs. Once interdiction becomes imminent, the law enforcement phase of the operation begins, and control of the operation shifts to the U.S. Coast Guard throughout the interdiction and apprehension. Interdictions in the Caribbean Sea are performed by members of the U.S. Coast Guard under the authority and control of the Coast Guard's Seventh District, headquartered in Miami.

This interdiction is part of an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) Strike Force Initiative, which provides for the establishment of permanent multi-agency task force teams that work side-by-side in the same location. OCDETF identifies, disrupts, and dismantles the highest-level criminal organizations that threaten the United States using a prosecutor-led, intelligence-driven, multi-agency approach. Additional information about the OCDETF program can be found at <https://www.justice.gov/OCDETF>.