Coast Guard Offloads More Than $96 Million in Illegal Narcotics Interdicted in the Caribbean Sea



Crew members from Coast Guard Cutter Forward offload more than $96 million in illegal narcotics at Port Everglades, Florida, July 22, 2024. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Nicholas Strasburg)

From U.S. Coast Guard 7th District, July 23, 2024

MIAMI – The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Forward offloaded more than 7,302 pounds of cocaine with an assessed street value of approximately $96 million in Port Everglades, Monday.

Coast Guard crews, working alongside interagency and international partners, interdicted the illegal drugs in the international waters of the Caribbean Sea during three

separate cases.

“This was another vital success of our combined drug interdiction efforts,” said Lt. Cmdr. Juan Ramirez, a Coast Guard District Seven staff attorney. “These drug offloads underscore our continued partnerships with the U.S. Navy and the Royal Netherlands Navy in combating the flow of illicit narcotics across the Caribbean. The success of our joint efforts to save lives by reducing the availability of these harmful drugs is dependent on our cooperation with regional and international partners.”

The following assets and crews were involved in the interdictions:

- Royal Netherlands Navy ship HNLMS Groningen (P 843)
- USS St. Louis (LCS 19)
- U.S. Coast Guard Tactical Law Enforcement Team Pacific (PAC-TACLET) Law Enforcement Detachments 110 and 105
- U.S. Coast Guard Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron (HITRON)
- Joint Interagency Task Force South (JIATF-South)
- U.S. Customs and Border Protection Air and Marine Operations (CBP-AMO)

Three suspected smugglers will face prosecution in federal courts by the Department of Justice.

PAC-TACLET is part of the Coast Guard's deployable specialized forces program, with advanced training in high-risk interdiction operations in the maritime environment, including non-compliant vessel pursuit missions. Law enforcement detachments from PAC-TACLET and HITRON aircrews deploy aboard Coast Guard, U.S. Navy and foreign allied ships to augment their capabilities and authorities to perform counter drug missions under U.S. law.

Detecting and interdicting illegal 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.

These interdictions relate to Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) designated investigations. 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.

USCGC Forward (WMEC 911) is a 270-foot Famous-class, medium endurance cutter homeported in Portsmouth, Virginia. The cutter's primary missions are counter drug operations, migrant interdiction operations, enforcement of federal fishery laws, and search and rescue in support of Coast Guard operations throughout the Western Hemisphere.