Coast Guard Offloads Nearly $50 Million in Illegal Narcotics Interdicted in Eastern Pacific Ocean



The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Escanaba pose with more than 3,400 pounds of cocaine and 4,410 pounds of marijuana with a combined assessed street value of approximately $50 million in Port Everglades, Florida, Aug. 23, 2024. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Eric Rodriguez)

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

MIAMI – The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Escanaba (WMEC 907) offloaded more than 3,400 pounds of cocaine and 4,410 pounds of marijuana with a combined assessed street value of approximately $50 million in Port Everglades, Friday, Aug. 23.

The Escanaba crew embarked a Coast Guard Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron aircrew, and Law Enforcement Detachment 107 from Coast Guard Tactical Law Enforcement Team Pacific. They worked alongside interagency and international partners to interdict illicit narcotics in the international waters off South America in the Eastern Pacific Ocean.

Coast Guard crews often deploy to the U.S. Southern Command joint operating area, which includes the Caribbean Sea and the Eastern Pacific Ocean, to conduct counter drug missions under Joint Interagency Task Force-South. Deployments for cutters assigned to the Coast Guard Atlantic Area Command include Panama Canal transits to deny transnational criminal organizations access to maritime trafficking routes in the Eastern Pacific Ocean.

“The Coast Guard’s presence in the Eastern Pacific is vital to our mission of disrupting the flow of illicit narcotics and safeguarding our nation’s security. The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Escanaba, through their unwavering professionalism and dedication, has once again demonstrated the critical role our people play in these complex operations,” said Vice Adm. Nathan Moore, commander, Coast Guard Atlantic Area. “By maintaining a strong presence in this region, we continue to protect our communities and uphold the highest standards of service. Coast Guard Cutter Escanaba’s success is a direct reflection of our commitment to mission excellence and the core values that guide us.”

The following assets and crews were involved in the interdictions:

- Coast Guard Cutter Escanaba (WMEC 907)
- Coast Guard Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron (HITRON) Jacksonville

- Law Enforcement Detachment (LEDET) 107 from Coast Guard Tactical Law Enforcement Team – Pacific (PAC TACLET)

- Joint Interagency Task Force South (JIATF-South)

- Eleventh Coast Guard District

“The counter narcotics mission continues to be a vital mission of the Coast Guard,” said Cmdr. Jared Silverman, commanding officer of Coast Guard Cutter Escanaba. “The crew of Escanaba, alongside our shipmates from HITRON and TACLET, executed the mission in outstanding fashion and ensured that the spirit of operational excellence lives on.”

Seven suspected smugglers were transferred to federal custody and face prosecution 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 based 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 Eastern Pacific Ocean are performed by members of the U.S. Coast Guard under the authority and control of the Coast Guard’s Eleventh District, headquartered in Alameda, California.

These interdictions relate to Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces’ Strike Force Initiatives and 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.

The Coast Guard is the United States' lead federal maritime law enforcement agency with authority to enforce national and international laws on the high seas and waters within U.S. jurisdiction. Coast Guard HITRON aircrews are uniquely qualified to conduct airborne use of force for non-compliant vessels, enhancing the Coast Guard's ability to react to maritime security threats and to better secure our maritime borders since the program's inception in 1999. For 25 years, HITRON crews have forward deployed aboard Coast Guard cutters and U.S. Navy or foreign allied warships to conduct drug interdiction operations.

Coast Guard Cutter Escanaba is a 270-foot Famous-class medium endurance cutter with a crew of 100 homeported in Portsmouth, Virginia.