Coast Guard Offloads Over $49.3 Million in Illicit Drugs Interdicted in Eastern Pacific Ocean



USCGC Foward's (WMEC-911) crew offload illicit drugs valued at more than $49.3 million at Port Everglades, Florida March 19, 2026. This offload was a result of two interdictions in the international waters of the Eastern Pacific Ocean by the crews of USCGC Spencer (WMEC-905) and Forward interdicting approximately 6,750 pounds of cocaine. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Seaman Christopher Moret)

From U.S. Coast Guard Southeast District, March 19, 2026

MIAMI – U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Forward's crew offloaded approximately 6,570 pounds of cocaine worth more than $49.3 million at Port Everglades, Thursday.

The seized contraband was the result of two interdictions in the international waters of the Eastern Pacific Ocean.

On Feb. 7, a maritime patrol aircraft located a suspicious vessel, and Coast Guard Cutter Spencer's embarked Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron aircrew employed airborne use-of-force tactics to disable the vessel. Spencer's boarding team interdicted the vessel and seized approximately 6,435 pounds of cocaine.

On March 8, a maritime patrol aircraft located a suspicious vessel, and Forward's embarked HITRON aircrew employed airborne use-of-force tactics to disable the vessel. Forward's crew interdicted the go-fast vessel, recovering approximately 130 pounds of cocaine.

"I'm incredibly proud of the crew for adding to the success of Operation Pacific Viper," said Cmdr. Andrew Grantham, Forward's commanding officer. "The Coast Guard and our partners are working tirelessly to stop narco-terrorists and criminal organizations before their dangerous and illegal cargos reach American shores."

The following assets and crews were involved in the interdiction operations:

- Coast Guard Cutter Forward
- Coast Guard Cutter Spencer
- Coast Guard Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron
- Joint Interagency Tasks Force-South
- Coast Guard Southeast District watchstanders

- Coast Guard Southwest District watchstanders

80% of interdictions of U.S.-bound drugs occur at sea. This underscores the importance of maritime interdiction in combatting the flow of illegal narcotics and protecting American communities from this deadly threat. U.S. Southern Command's Joint Interagency Task Force-South based in Key West 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 Southwest District**, headquartered in Alameda, California.

To protect the Homeland from ongoing trafficking of illicit narcotics from South America to the United States, the Coast Guard is accelerating our counter-drug operations in the Eastern Pacific Ocean in support of Operation Pacific Viper. Since launching this operation in early August, the Coast Guard has seized over 200,000 pounds of cocaine, and apprehended 150 suspected drug smugglers.

The Coast Guard continues increased operations to interdict, seize and disrupt transshipments of cocaine and other bulk illicit drugs by sea. These drugs fuel and enable cartels and transnational criminal organizations to produce and traffic illegal fentanyl, threatening the United States.

These interdictions deny criminal organizations illicit revenue. They provide critical testimonial and drug evidence as well as key intelligence for their total elimination. These interdictions relate to Homeland Security Task Force Tampa, investigations in support of Operation Take Back America, which identifies, disrupts, and dismantles the highest-level criminal organizations that threaten the United States using a

prosecutor-led, intelligence-driven, multi-agency approach.

Coast Guard Cutter Forward is a 270-foot medium endurance cutter homeported in Portsmouth, Virginia under **U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area Command**.