# Coast Guard, OPBAT Halt Drug Smuggling Operation Near Bahamas



Operations Bahamas and Turks and Caicos personnel stand amongst 2,274 pounds of interdicted marijuana near Exuma, Bahamas, Monday. Royal Bahamas Police Force

MIAMI – The Coast Guard, along with the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Air Marine Operation (CBP-AMO), Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), and the Royal Bahamas Police Force (RBPF) interdicted four Bahamian suspected drug smugglers, Sept. 21, approximately 10 miles south of the Exuma Island chain in the Bahamas, the Coast Guard 7th District said in a Sept. 23 release.

Coast Guard 7th District watchstanders initially received a report of a go-fast vessel crew suspected of drug smuggling transiting northbound approximately 10 miles south of Exuma Islands, Bahamas. Operations Bahamas and Turks and Caicos (OPBAT) launched two Coast Guard Air Station Clearwater MH-60 Jayhawk helicopter crews with DEA agents aboard that assisted a CBP-AMO Maritime Patrol Aircraft crew in tracking the go-fast vessel for more than four hours. Additionally, one of the MH-60 helicopter crews vectored the Bahamas police boat crew for intercept and a high-speed pursuit that led to the successful interdiction of the drug-laden go fast.

During the pursuit, one of the suspected smugglers was injured, and an MH-60 helicopter crew medevaced the suspect to Exuma International Airport for further transfer to medical facilities in Nassau. The RBPF apprehended the other three suspects and seized 2,274 pounds of marijuana.

“This collaborative success is a testament to the longstanding relationship we share with all our OPBAT partners and has

allowed us to keep over 2,000 pounds of illegal narcotics off the streets," said Cmdr. Mike Benson, the OPBAT director stationed in Nassau. "The fight against drug cartels in the Caribbean Basin requires a unity of effort in all phases from detection, monitoring, interdiction, and criminal prosecutions. We are very fortunate to have such a healthy working relationship with our partner nations."