Coast Guard’s Newest National Security Cutter Seizes 2,100-Plus Pounds of Cocaine

A boarding team member from the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Midgett (WMSL 757) inspects contraband discovered within a suspected drug smuggling vessel interdicted in international waters of the Eastern Pacific Ocean, July 26, 2019. U.S. COAST GUARD

ALAMEDA, Calif. – Crews aboard the pre-commissioned Coast Guard Cutter Midgett (WMSL 757) seized more than 2,100 pounds of cocaine worth approximately $64 million from a low-profile go-fast vessel interdicted in international waters of the Eastern Pacific Ocean, the Coast Guard Pacific Area said in an Aug. 7 release.

On July 25 a U.S. Navy MH-60R Seahawk aircrew embarked aboard the USS Michael Murphy (DDG 112) sighted a low-profile go-fast vessel. As the helicopter approached, a hatch opened on the top of the vessel and three passengers were seen jettisoning objects.

The Michael Murphy remained with the suspected smuggling vessel until the Midgett arrived on scene to conduct a law enforcement boarding. Midgett’s boarding team seized approximately 2,100 pounds of cocaine from the interdiction and

apprehended three suspected smugglers.

“Even
though the cutter is still in a pre-commission status, this interdiction
showcases how ready our crew is and how capable the national security cutters
are,” said Capt. Alan McCabe, Midgett’s commanding officer. “It also
demonstrates the importance of our partnership with the U.S. Navy, whose
contributions are vital in stemming the flow of drugs into the United States.”

Nearly 80%
of all known illegal narcotics coming into North America are smuggled by
international cartels through the Eastern Pacific corridor. As these cartels become more advanced in
their methods at sea, the Coast Guard is recapitalizing its fleet with modern
assets equipped to detect, interdict and disrupt the growing flow of illegal
drugs, weapons and people in the Eastern Pacific.

Midgett,
the Coast Guard’s eighth national security cutter, was accepted by the Coast Guard
in April. The cutter passed through the Panama Canal in July and is sailing to
Midgett’s future homeport in Honolulu, where it will be commissioned Aug. 24,
along with its sister-ship, the Coast Guard Cutter Kimball (WMSL 756).

While
national security cutters like the Midgett possess advanced operational

capabilities, more than 70% of the Coast Guard’s offshore presence is the service’s aging fleet of medium-endurance cutters, many of which are over 50 years old and approaching the end of their service life.

Replacing the fleet with new offshore patrol cutters is one of the Coast Guard’s top priorities.

The offshore patrol cutter will provide a critical capability bridge between national security cutters like the Coast Guard Cutter Munro (WMSL 755), which offloaded 39,000 pounds of cocaine last month, and fast-response cutters like the Robert Ward, which recently seized more than 3,000 pounds of the cocaine in the first cocaine seizure made by a fast-response cutter in the Eastern Pacific.