

Cutter Offloads 7,500 Pounds of Interdicted Cocaine, Marijuana in San Diego



The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Bertholf (WMSL-750) offloads approximately 7,500 pounds of seized cocaine and marijuana in San Diego, March 20, 2021. *U.S. Coast Guard / Petty Officer 2nd Class Travis Magee*

SAN DIEGO – The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Bertholf (WMSL-750) offloaded approximately 7,500 pounds of seized cocaine and marijuana in San Diego, March 10, the Coast Guard 11th District said in a release.

The drugs, worth an estimated \$126.7 million, were seized in international waters of the eastern Pacific Ocean between January and February, representing 10 suspected drug smuggling vessel interdictions off the coasts of Mexico, Central and South America by the following Coast Guard and Navy ships:

The Coast Guard Cutter Bertholf (WMSL 750) crew was responsible for four interdictions seizing approximately 6,200 pounds of cocaine.

The Coast Guard Cutter Munro (WMSL 755) crew was responsible for three interdictions seizing approximately 1,100 pounds of cocaine and 50 pounds of marijuana.

The Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment 107 deployed aboard the USS Freedom (LCS 1) was responsible for one interdiction seizing approximately 22 pounds of cocaine.

The Coast Guard Cutter Harriet Lane (WMEC 903) crew was responsible for one interdiction seizing approximately 50 pounds of marijuana.

The Coast Guard Cutter Vigilant (WMEC 617) crew was responsible for one interdiction seizing approximately 22 pounds of cocaine.

Speakers at the event included Adm. Karl Schultz, the Coast Guard commandant, and Capt. Brian Anderson, the Bertholf commanding officer.

“The 7,000 pounds of cocaine offloaded today was interdicted as a result of extraordinary effort and joint and interagency partnerships,” said Schultz. “While the Bertholf may have physically stopped or interdicted the drug smuggling vessels, our DoD and DHS partners, particularly CBP Air and Marine Operations maritime patrol aircraft, coordinated through Joint Interagency Task Force-South, put the Bertholf in the right place at the right time to conduct at-sea interdictions.”

On April 1, U.S. Southern Command increased counter-narcotics operations in the Western Hemisphere to disrupt the flow of drugs. Numerous U.S. agencies from the departments of Defense, Justice, and Homeland Security cooperated in the effort to combat transnational organized crime. The Coast Guard, Navy, Customs and Border Protection, FBI, Drug Enforcement

Administration, and Immigration and Customs Enforcement, along with allied and international partner agencies, play a role in counter-drug operations.

The fight against drug cartels in the Eastern Pacific Ocean requires unity of effort in all phases from detection, monitoring, and interdictions, to criminal prosecutions by international partners and U.S. Attorneys' Offices in districts across the nation. The law enforcement phase of counter-smuggling operations in the eastern Pacific Ocean is conducted under the authority of the 11th Coast Guard District, headquartered in Alameda. The interdictions, including the actual boardings, are led and conducted by members of the U.S. Coast Guard.

"The crew is lauded for their dedication to duty and resiliency throughout this patrol," Anderson said. "Tasks that once seemed routine, became more complex with personal protective equipment and decontamination procedures added to our standard operating procedures. Early in the deployment, we interdicted three go-fast vessels over a span of six hours, which demonstrated our full capabilities and our commitment to keeping America safe and secure. I couldn't be more proud of my crew."

The Bertholf is a 418-foot national security cutter, commissioned in 2008 and homeported in Alameda. The Munro is a 418-foot national security cutter homeported in Alameda. The Freedom is a 387-foot littoral combat ship homeported in San Diego. The Harriet Lane is a 270-foot medium-endurance cutter homeported in Portsmouth, Virginia. The Vigilant is a 210-foot medium-endurance cutter homeported in Port Canaveral, Florida.