Cutter Returns to Oregon Following $54 Million Cocaine Seizure



Coast Guardsmen prepare bails of cocaine to be offloaded from the Coast Guard Cutter Alert in San Diego on Oct. 16. The crew offloaded about 6,800 pounds of cocaine. U.S. Coast Guard/Petty Officer 3rd Class Alex Gray

ASTORIA, Ore. – The crew of the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Alert returned to their homeport on Oct. 25 following a 10,700-nautical-mile, 65-day, multimission patrol that resulted in the interdiction of nearly 4,000 pounds of cocaine worth about $54 million, the Coast Guard said in a release.

Alert's crew conducted counterdrug operations in international waters of the eastern Pacific Ocean, where boarding teams interdicted two go-fast vessels, seizing the cocaine and detaining six suspected drug smugglers.

Three Mexican naval officers joined Alert for the patrol to share lessons learned and to build cohesion between the sea services.

"I am extremely proud of this crew for doing their part to keep these dangerous drugs off the streets," said Cmdr. Tyson Scofield, Alert's commanding officer. "The eastern Pacific … is a challenging environment, especially on a ship that is in her 50th year of service, yet this crew persevered to disrupt the illegal flow of narcotics that fuels instability in Central and South America. The counterdrug mission is as important now as it has ever been, and these brave men and women can return home after a 65-day patrol knowing they made a difference."

The Coast Guard's medium-endurance cutters represent 70% of

the service’s counterdrug interdiction fleet, but many are nearing the end of their service life. Replacing the aging fleet of medium endurance cutters with the offshore patrol cutter is one of the Coast Guard’s top priorities.

As cartels become more advanced in their trafficking methods at sea, the Coast Guard is recapitalizing the fleet with modern assets equipped to detect, interdict and disrupt the growing flow of illegal drugs, weapons and people in the eastern Pacific.

Alert’s crew offloaded more than $92 million worth of cocaine Oct. 16 in San Diego before returning home. The cocaine offloaded represents a total of four suspected drug smuggling vessel interdictions by the crews of the Alert and the Coast Guard Cutters Robert Ward and Seneca, who patrolled the same international waters between late July and early October.

Alert’s crew also patrolled off the coast of California, providing an increased off-shore deterrence to illicit narcotics trafficking and human smuggling. The amount of recreational and commercial fishing traffic provided Alert’s law enforcement teams with opportunities to board vessels not normally inspected at sea.

Alert’s engineers also provided mechanical assistance to a disabled vessel, helping the distressed crew return to port prior to the arrival of gale force weather conditions.

Alert’s embarked helicopter and aircrew from Air Station Humboldt Bay also assisted two U.S. Navy ships by flying their severely injured crew members ashore to receive advanced medical treatment.

Alert began its patrol by participating in the 2019 Los Angeles Fleet Week celebration, a public event that celebrated the U.S. armed forces and the Port of Los Angeles. During that week, Alert’s crew provided shipboard tours to 880 people and worked jointly with the Coast Guard Cutter Forrest

Rednour to increase the public’s awareness to the Coast Guard and its missions. The crew also volunteered in a Habitat for Humanity community service event where they aided a local food bank with boxing meals for families in need.