

Cutter Robert Ward Returns from first Eastern Pacific Patrol with 2,800 Pounds of Intercepted Cocaine



Rear Adm. Peter Gautier, commander of the U.S. Coast Guard's 11th District, addresses the crew of the cutter Robert Ward on Aug. 29 at Coast Guard Base Los Angeles-Long Beach in San Pedro, California. U.S. Coast Guard/Petty Officer 3rd Class Aidan Cooney

SAN PEDRO,

Calif. – The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Robert Ward (WPC-1130) returned Aug.

29 from their first patrol of the drug transit zones of the eastern Pacific

Ocean with about 2,800 pounds of seized cocaine, the Coast Guard 11th District

said in a release.

The

cocaine, worth an estimated \$38.5 million, was seized by the crews of the

Robert Ward and another Coast Guard cutter patrolling the region. An additional

estimated 3,000 pounds of cocaine, seized by the crew of the Robert Ward in

mid-July in the cutter's first-ever drug bust, was transferred to the Coast

Guard Cutter Steadfast (WMEC-623) and brought ashore in San Diego last month as

part of a 13-ton bulk offload.

“The

Cutter Robert Ward and three other newly commissioned cutters

based in San

Pedro are strengthening the Coast Guard's safety, security and counter-smuggling efforts along our coast and in the shipping zones off Central

and South America," said Rear Adm. Peter W. Gautier, the 11th District's commander.

"I'm proud of the Ward's crew and applaud their actions to disrupt the cartels

that profit from crime, addiction and ruin American lives."



Robert Ward returns to homeport Aug. 29 after a counter-narcotics patrol in the eastern Pacific Ocean. U.S. Coast Guard/Seaman Ian Gray

The Robert

Ward, commissioned in March, is one of four newly commissioned fast-response cutters

(FRCs) homeported in San Pedro as part of the Coast Guard's efforts to

strengthen forces in the region and increase safety, security and emergency

response capabilities.

"This was

a fantastic patrol," said Lt. Benjamin Davne, Robert Ward's commanding officer.

"We helped stem the flow of illegal drugs by seizing and disrupting more than

three tons of cocaine. We saved lives by keeping these drugs off the streets.

Our crew is in friendly competition with other fast-response cutter crews

stationed in other parts of the nation and on our first patrol we are already

credited with the second largest cocaine seizure and disruption rate for any

Coast Guard ship in our class."

The fight
against drug cartels in the eastern Pacific requires unity of
effort in all
phases from detection, monitoring and interdictions, to
criminal prosecutions
by U.S. Attorneys in districts across the nation.

The Coast
Guard increased U.S. and allied presence in the Pacific Ocean
and Caribbean
Basin, which are known drug transit zones off Central and
South America, as
part of its Western Hemisphere Strategy.

During at-sea
interdictions, a suspect vessel is detected and monitored by
allied, military
or law enforcement personnel coordinated by Joint Interagency
Task Force-South
based in Key West, Florida. The law enforcement phase of
counter-smuggling
operations in the eastern Pacific is conducted under the
authority of the 11th
Coast Guard District, headquartered in Alameda.