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.