Cutter Stratton Visits Fiji during Operation Blue Pacific Patrol



The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Stratton conducts patrols in Fiji's exclusive economic zone with Fijian law enforcement personnel in February. The Coast Guard's mission to combat IUU fishing is essential in protecting maritime governance and a rules-based international order to ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific. *U.S. COAST GUARD*

SUVA, Fiji – The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Stratton visited Fiji in February after being underway for 50-days in the Pacific combating illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, the Coast Guard 14th District said Feb. 15.

During the visit, Capt. Stephen Adler, the Stratton's commanding officer, met with members of the Fijian media to

discuss the Coast Guard's partnership with Fiji and their combined effort to protect fisheries resources.

"Our relationships with our partner nations are more important than ever in combating illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing," said Adler. "We are pleased to work with our Fijian partners to maintain maritime sovereignty and security throughout the region."

While in the country, the Stratton's crew welcomed aboard three Fijian ship riders who, with the assistance of Stratton's law enforcement boarding teams, will ensure compliance with applicable Fijian fishing laws within Fiji's exclusive economic zone.

The Coast Guard's mission to combat IUU fishing is essential in protecting maritime governance and a rules-based international order to ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific.

The fisheries industry is a significant source of food and income throughout the Pacific. Protecting this renewable resource is a priority for the United States and Pacific Island Countries as IUU fishing in the Pacific has global impacts and effects.

Recently IUU fishing has replaced piracy as the leading global maritime security threat and has the potential to have a global effect if unchecked.

Prior to visiting Fiji, the Stratton's crew had been working with British, Australian, New Zealand, and French allied naval forces as well as the U.S. Navy in support of the Tongan government following the volcanic eruption on Jan 15.

The crew also conducted a number of drills and exercises with allied partners including helicopter operations with the Armed Forces in French Polynesia, fueling at sea with the Royal New

Zealand Navy Ship Aotearoa, and multiple maneuvering exercises with the Royal Navy HMS Spey.

The Stratton is a 418-foot national security cutter capable of extended, worldwide deployment in support of homeland security and defense missions. NSCs routinely conduct operations throughout the Pacific and Atlantic oceans; their unmatched combination of range, speed, and ability to operate in extreme weather provides the mission flexibility necessary to conduct vital strategic missions.

Operation Blue Pacific is an overarching multi-mission Coast Guard endeavor, promoting security, safety, sovereignty, and economic prosperity in Oceania while strengthening relationships between partner nations in the Pacific.