Cutter Tampa Returns Home After Interdicting $154 Million in Drugs



The Coast Guard Cutter Tampa on patrol in the eastern Pacific Ocean last August. The Tampa's crew interdicted four vessels with more than 9,200 pounds of cocaine, worth an estimated $154 million. U.S. Coast Guard/Petty Officer 2nd Class Lisa Ferdinando

PORTSMOUTH, Va. – The crew of the U.S. Coast Guard cutter Tampa returned Feb. 16 to their homeport in Portsmouth, Virginia, after an 80-day counter-drug patrol in the eastern Pacific Ocean, the Coast Guard's 5th District said in a release.

The Tampa's crew interdicted four vessels with more than 9,200 pounds of cocaine, worth an estimated $154 million. The crew also detained 12 suspected drug smugglers, boarded three additional vessels and responded to one search-and-rescue case.

The cutter began the patrol by embarking an armed helicopter crew from the Coast Guard's Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron (HITRON) in Mayport, Florida. Working together they were able to increase the Coast Guard's ability to detect and stop vessels suspected of drug smuggling.

Prior to entering the primary patrol area, the crew of the Tampa conducted a training engagement with the Guatemalan navy in Puerto Santo Tomás de Castilla as part of Operation Crested Eagle. The Tampa's crew provided law-enforcement training, tours of the ship, and engineering technical support for Guatemalan vessels.

The crew is looking forward to spending time with friends and

family during a well-deserved stand-down period. They will then prepare for the biennial Tailored Ship’s Training Availability, a several-week program designed to train the crew and assess the readiness of the cutter through a variety of drills.

“I am humbled and very proud of what our crew has accomplished during this patrol,” said Cmdr. Michael Cilenti, commanding officer of the Tampa.

“Just keeping our 36-year-old ship operating is a full-time job, and our crew not only did that, but safely and professionally executed our counter-drug mission. Saving lives by keeping drugs off our streets and helping eliminate drug cartels’ destabilizing influence of our Central and South American neighbors is something we all care very deeply about.”