FRC Demonstrates Long-Range Transit to American Samoa



The Coast Guard Cutter Joseph Gerczak moored in the Port of Pago Pago, American Samoa, on Aug. 3. The crew is participating in Operation Aiga to conduct fisheries law enforcement and strengthen partnerships in American Samoa and Samoa throughout August. U.S. Coast Guard/Chief Petty Officer Sara Muir

PAGO PAGO,
American Samoa – The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Joseph Gerczak (WPC 1126) arrived
in the Port of Pago Pago on Aug. 3, completing a nine-day transit from Hawaii
that demonstrated the long-range capabilities of the fast-response cutter.

The crew
is participating in Operation Aiga to conduct fisheries law enforcement and
strengthen partnerships in American Samoa and Samoa throughout August.

“It was a good transit, the longest we’ve conducted yet, nine days at sea, and we’re proving the capabilities of these new cutters to operate over the horizon throughout the remote Pacific,” said Lt. James Provost, commanding officer of Joseph Gerczak. “This is the first time a fast-response cutter has come to Pago Pago. We’re looking forward to hosting our partners and the public during tours [Aug. 5] from 1 to 3 p.m. here at the port.”

The Coast
Guard is positioned to enforce U.S. federal laws and regulations in the
territorial waters of American Samoa. Worldwide, tuna is a $7

billion-dollar annual industry, and roughly 70 percent of that tuna comes from the western and central Pacific Ocean. These pelagic fish migrate and it is essential the U.S. and its partners protect the resource from illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing. Estimates place the value of IUU fishing around $616 million annually.

> *“It was a good transit, the longest we’ve conducted yet, nine days at sea, and we’re proving the capabilities of these new cutters to operate over the horizon throughout the remote Pacific.”*
>
> *Lt. James Provost, commanding officer of Joseph Gerczak*

“After this port call, we will be working with NOAA fisheries and the American Samoa Marine Police to enforce fisheries regulations in the region while on patrol. Oceania countries adhering to the rule of law deserve and even playing field. Presence, partnerships, and regular enforcement can deter IUU fishing and safeguard these critical fish stocks,” Provost said.

The Coast Guard Cutter Walnut (WLB 205) crew will also be conducting a fisheries mission with shipriders from Samoa aboard to enforce sovereign laws in their EEZ and deter IUU fishing. This effort is being undertaken in coordination with Australia and New Zealand as Samoa transitions their organic patrol assets,

upgrading their fleet. Both cutter crews will also respond to any emergent search-and-rescue needs in the area and seek out opportunities to work with partner nation assets.

The Coast Guard exercises 11 bilateral shiprider agreements with Pacific Island Forum nations to help ensure regional security and maritime sovereignty.

“The U.S. is committed to supporting our allies and neighbors in the Pacific, which is essential to a free and open Indo-Pacific.”

The Joseph Gerczak is a 154-foot Sentinel-Class fast-response cutter homeported in Honolulu. It is one of the newest patrol boats in the fleet. Three fast-response cutters will be homeported in Honolulu, the third arriving in August. Three will also be stationed in Guam and are to begin arriving there next year.