Hamilton Returns Home from 54-Day Counter-Drug Patrol

CHARLESTON, S.C. – The Coast Guard Cutter Hamilton crew returned to home Dec. 17 at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in Charleston, the 7th Coast Guard District said in a release.

Hamilton's crew spent the majority of their 54-day deployment conducting counter-drug operations in the Eastern Pacific Ocean. At the beginning of the patrol, Hamilton executed an exhaustive three-day search, along with Coast Guard aircraft, for a civilian aircraft that reportedly crashed approximately 100 miles off the coast of South Carolina.

While patrolling the drug-trafficking routes in the Eastern Pacific Ocean, Hamilton detained 21 suspected drug smugglers from five different vessels, and seized over 4.7 tons of cocaine, valued at over $140 million bound for the shores of the United States. In addition, the cutter crossed the equator, a milestone for sailors and cuttermen alike.

Demonstrating the robust command and control capabilities of the national security cutter, Hamilton's crew temporarily assumed complete tactical control of all counter-drug operations in the Eastern Pacific Ocean and Caribbean, coordinating tasking of all air and surface assets in the fight against transnational criminal and drug-trafficking organizations.

During the final days of the patrol, Hamilton's crew responded to report of an injured crew member from the Panamanian-flagged cargo vessel Pacific Talent in the Gulf of Mexico. Hamilton's crew supported the medical evacuation of the crew member by directing response operations, providing vital command and control, and delivering fuel to the helicopter

that hoisted the crew member to safety.

Hamilton’s crew visited Aruba, Panama, Costa Rica, and made two transits through the Panama Canal. In Golfito, Costa Rica, Hamilton’s crew transferred four suspected drug smugglers to Costa Rica’s Policia Control de Druga following the successful interdiction of a Costa Rican-flag fishing vessel increasing the nation’s partnerships in the fight against drug trafficking organizations.

Building upon that partnership, Hamilton’s crew hosted Costa Rican officials aboard to discuss current and future cooperation between Costa Rica and the United States. Attendees included the U.S. Ambassador to Costa Rica, Sharon Day; U.S. Coast Guard Deputy for Operations Policy and Capabilities, Rear Adm. Meredith Austin; as well as Costa Rica’s National Assembly Speaker of the House, Minister of Public Security and Commandant of the Costa Rican Coast Guard. Members of U.S. Joint Task Force-Bravo, based out of Honduras, conducted a medical readiness exercise, enhanced dialogue and reinforced the United States’ commitment to Costa Rica.

“I could not be more impressed by this crew and their dedication to keeping over 4,290 kilograms of cocaine off of the streets,” stated Capt. Mark Gordon, Hamilton’s commanding officer. “It has been a busy two months for this ship and her crew in this constantly demanding maritime environment. We’re excited to be returning to homeport for the holidays and to prepare for our next patrol.”