U.S. Coast Guard, Navy Seize Nearly 1,300 Pounds of Cocaine in Eastern Pacific



U.S. Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment (LEDET) 105 embarked aboard the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Sampson (DDG 102), prepare to offload interdicted contraband from a rigid-hull inflatable boat while conducting maritime interdiction operations in the Eastern Pacific, Aug. 11, 2025. (U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Sheryssa Dodard)

From MC1 Brandon Roberson, Aug. 18, 2025

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PACIFIC OCEAN – A U.S. Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment (LEDET), embarked aboard the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Sampson (DDG 102), interdicted a suspected drug smuggling vessel and seized approximately 1,296 pounds of cocaine in international waters Aug. 11.

The Sampson, operating in a known drug trafficking corridor, identified a suspicious vessel exhibiting telltale indicators of smuggling, including excessive fuel barrels and packaged cargo visible on deck. Upon receiving authorization, the ship launched a U.S. Navy MH-60R Sea Hawk helicopter from Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron (HSM) 49, as well as a rigid-hull inflatable boat (RHIB) to intercept.

The suspect vessel attempted to flee and began jettisoning packages overboard. After warning shots failed to compel compliance, the helicopter crew, under Coast Guard direction, employed disabling fire, successfully halting the vessel without injury.
Two boarding teams, including members from LEDET 105, conducted a non-compliant boarding and recovered 12 bales of suspected narcotics. Field tests confirmed the presence of cocaine, and two individuals were taken into custody.

Due to deteriorating seaworthiness and heavy seas, the vessel began taking on water and was deemed unsafe to tow. The suspects were transferred to Sampson, and the vessel was left to sink to mitigate navigational hazards.

The interdiction was conducted under international law and a bilateral agreement with Ecuador. Upon mission completion, tactical control of the Sampson returned to U.S. 3rd Fleet.

This operation reflects ongoing cooperation between the U.S. Navy, U.S. Coast Guard, and interagency partners to disrupt transnational criminal networks operating in the maritime domain.

The Sampson is employed under U.S. Northern Command’s maritime homeland defense authorities with a Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment embarked to enable maritime interdiction missions to prevent the flow of illegal drugs and other illegal activity. U.S. Northern Command is working together with the Department of Homeland Security to provide additional military forces and capabilities at the southern border.