

# USCGC Harriet Lane Conducts Law Enforcement Operations with Cook Islands Partners



Crew members from U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Harriet Lane (WMEC 903) and Fishery Officers from the Cook Island Ministry of Marine Resources converse with crew members of a fishing vessel during an fishery inspection of the vessel June 7, 2025, in the Pacific Ocean. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Austin Wiley)

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RAROTONGA, Cook Islands – The U.S. Coast Guard concluded bilateral maritime law enforcement operations alongside Cook Islands law enforcement partners offshore Rarotonga Friday.

The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Harriet Lane (WMEC 903) worked

alongside the Cook Islands' Ministry of Marine Resources to conduct fisheries law enforcement patrols. These mutually beneficial patrols focused on detecting and deterring illegal fishing activities while ensuring the sustainable management of marine resources within the Cook Islands' exclusive economic zone (EEZ), which borders the EEZ of American Samoa.

"Working with the Cook Islands' Ministry of Marine Resources has been an incredible opportunity," said Cmdr. Nicole Tesoniero, commanding officer of the Harriet Lane. "Seeing firsthand our combined dedication to protecting marine resources and upholding laws and regulations reinforces the importance of these partnerships. We're proud to support their efforts in ensuring a sustainable future for their waters and the wider Pacific."

During this nine-day operation, the Harriet Lane crew and two Ministry of Marine Resources officers conducted six boardings of fishing vessels operating within the Cook Islands' EEZ, resulting in one suspected violation. These boardings focused on verifying compliance with Cook Island fisheries regulations, including proper licensing, gear restrictions and reporting requirements. The increased presence of law enforcement activity serves as a deterrent to potential illegal fishing activities. Additionally, the Harriet Lane crew's presence deters increasing trends of drug smuggling in the Pacific.

"As a small island and developing state like the Cook Islands, our biggest advantage and our strength is through cooperation with our partners in the Pacific when conducting fisheries boardings," said Sai Sarau, a Cook Islands Ministry of Marine Resources Fisheries officer. "Together, we will weave a stronger Pacific community ready to face future challenges."

These bilateral operations are conducted under the existing maritime law enforcement agreement between the U.S. and Cook

Islands. These agreements allow U.S. Coast Guard personnel to work with partner nations to enforce their sovereign laws and protect shared maritime interests, contributing to a joint objective in countering malign and illegal behaviors in the Oceania region.

“This operation is an example of the enduring partnership between the United States and the Cook Islands,” said Cmdr. Nicholas Gilmore, U.S. Coast Guard Attaché to U.S. Embassy Wellington, New Zealand. “We are committed to working alongside our Cook Islands partners to promote maritime security, protect valuable marine ecosystems, and ensure a prosperous and sustainable future for the region.”

#### **About the U.S. Coast Guard in the Pacific:**

Based in Honolulu, the U.S. Coast Guard Fourteenth District continues to foster enduring partnerships with regional allies through Operation Blue Pacific, an overarching multi-mission endeavor promoting security, safety, sovereignty, and economic prosperity in Oceania. The U.S. Coast Guard remains committed to maritime security, safety and stewardship, solidifying its longstanding reputation in the Pacific as a trusted partner.

#### **About U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Harriet Lane:**

Commissioned in 1984, Harriet Lane is a 270-foot medium-endurance cutter homeported in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, to support Coast Guard missions in the Pacific region. The service’s medium endurance cutter fleet supports a variety of Coast Guard missions including search and rescue, law enforcement, maritime defense, and protection of the marine environment.