

Coast Guard Interdicts 25 Migrants Off Mona Island, Puerto Rico

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Joseph Napier (WPC-1115) repatriated 22 of 25 Dominican migrants to a Dominican Republic Navy vessel Feb. 4, following the interdiction of a makeshift boat Feb. 2, approximately 20 nautical miles northwest of Mona Island, Puerto Rico, the Coast Guard 7th District said in a February release.

Three of the interdicted migrants are facing possible federal prosecution by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Puerto Rico for illegally attempting to re-enter the United States.

The Coast Guard and federal and Commonwealth of Puerto Rico law enforcement partners have interdicted more than 400 migrants and stopped several narcotics smuggling attempts since October of 2018.

"The migrants were attempting to make the transit across an ocean passage in a vessel that was inherently unsafe due to overloading, missing all required safety equipment, and operating without navigation lights," said Lt. John Schulz, cutter Joseph Napier commanding officer. "Many lives are lost each year by these types of ventures and are a direct threat to the people who attempt the voyage. Each person saved is a testament to how critical the Coast Guard and our partner agencies efforts are to ensuring that there is not a unnecessary loss of life in the waters surrounding Puerto Rico."

The crew of a Coast Guard HC-144 Ocean Sentry aircraft from Air Station Miami, while on a routine patrol of the Mona Passage, detected a 35-foot makeshift boat Friday night with

an undetermined number of passengers aboard transiting towards Puerto Rico.

The Coast Guard Cutter Joseph Napier was diverted and interdicted the migrant vessel Saturday morning embarking all 25 Dominican migrants, 24 men and a woman.

Following at-sea interdictions, illegal migrants that are stopped are repatriated to their country of origin or returned to their place of departure. In some cases, those migrants found to have a criminal history with possible connection to smuggling operations are turned over to law enforcement authorities for further prosecution by the Department of Justice. Once aboard a Coast Guard cutter, all migrants receive food, water, shelter and basic medical attention.

The Joseph Napier is a 154-foot fast response cutter homeported in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Coast Guard Offloads 34,780 Pounds of Cocaine in Port Everglades



MIAMI – The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Forward (WMEC-911) offloaded approximately 34,780 pounds of cocaine Feb. 5 in Port Everglades worth an estimated \$466 million wholesale seized in international waters in the Eastern Pacific Ocean, the Coast Guard 7th District said in a release of the same date.

The drugs were interdicted off the coasts of Mexico, Central,

and South America and represent 21 separate suspected drug smuggling vessel interdictions by the U.S. Coast Guard.

The cutter Forward was responsible for eight cases seizing an estimated 14,207 pounds of cocaine. The Coast Guard Cutter Hamilton (WMSL-753) was responsible for five cases, seizing an estimated 9,460 pounds of cocaine. The Coast Guard Cutter Campbell (WMEC-909) was responsible for four cases, seizing an estimated 6,153 pounds of cocaine. The Coast Guard Cutter Alert (WMEC-630) was responsible for two cases, seizing an estimated 5,736 pounds of cocaine. The Coast Guard Cutter Venturous (WMEC-625) was responsible for one case, seizing an estimated 1,565 pounds of cocaine. The Coast Guard Cutter Confidence (WMEC-619) was responsible for one case seizing an estimated 553 pounds of cocaine.

“The interdiction and disruption of more than 17 tons of cocaine is a result of the collaboration and coordination of multiple Coast Guard and interagency assets to address the complex maritime challenge of transnational criminal organizations,” said Cmdr. Michael Sharp, commanding officer of the cutter Forward. “I am extremely proud of all the women and men that contributed to the mission success, it is a direct reflection of how the U.S. Coast Guard delivers mission excellence anytime, anywhere.”

Numerous U.S. agencies from the Departments of Defense, Justice and Homeland Security are involved in the effort to combat transnational organized crime. The Coast Guard, Navy, Customs and Border Protection, FBI, Drug Enforcement Administration, and Immigration and Customs Enforcement along with allied and international partner agencies play a role in counter-drug operations. The fight against transnational organized crime networks in the Eastern Pacific requires unity of effort in all phases from detection, monitoring and interdictions, to prosecutions by U.S. Attorneys in Florida, California, New York, the Gulf Coast, Puerto Rico and elsewhere.

The Coast Guard increased U.S. and allied presence in the Eastern Pacific Ocean and Caribbean Basin, which are known drug transit zones off of Central and South America, as part of its Western Hemisphere Strategy. During at-sea interdictions in international waters, a suspect vessel is initially located and tracked by allied, military or law enforcement personnel. The interdictions, including the actual boarding, are led and conducted by U.S. Coast Guardsmen. The law enforcement phase of counter-smuggling operations in the Eastern Pacific are conducted under the authority of the Coast Guard 11th District headquartered in Alameda, California.

The cutter Forward is a 270-foot medium-endurance cutter homeported in Portsmouth, Virginia. The cutter Hamilton is a 418-foot national security cutter homeported in Charleston, South Carolina. The cutter Campbell is a 270-foot medium endurance cutter homeported in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The cutter Alert is a 210-foot medium-endurance cutter homeported in Astoria, Oregon. The cutter Venturous is a 210-foot medium-endurance cutter homeported in St. Petersburg, Florida. The cutter Confidence is a 210-foot medium-endurance cutter homeported in Port Canaveral, Florida.

Coast Guard Cutter Diligence Returns Home Following Counter-Drug Interdictions

Wilmington, N.C. – The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Diligence returned to Wilmington, North Carolina, Feb. 2 following a 42-day patrol in the Caribbean, the Coast Guard 5th District said in a Feb. 3 release.

The crew of the Diligence performed counter-drug operations and participated in international engagements in support of Joint Interagency Task Force South.

In concert with JIATF South, the crew of the Diligence worked alongside interagency and international partners to prevent and respond to illegal maritime migration and narcotic smuggling from Central and South America. The crew of the Diligence facilitated the transport of six suspected drug smugglers, 1,200 pounds of marijuana and 50 kilograms of cocaine apprehended by other Coast Guard assets.

The crewmembers of the Diligence also conducted an engagement coincidental to operations with the Honduran Navy in Roatán, Honduras. The crew shared their expertise in engineering and law enforcement with the Honduran Navy.

“The crew of Diligence adapted and worked together to achieve operational success while enhancing key partnerships in Central America,” said Comdr. Robert S. Mohr, commanding officer of the Diligence. “I am extremely proud and truly impressed with the crew’s unwavering devotion to duty throughout this dynamic patrol.”

Coast Guard Cutter Diligence is a 54-year-old, 210-foot medium-endurance cutter homeported in Wilmington. The Diligence’s primary missions consist of counter-drug and migrant interdiction, federal fisheries enforcement, and search and rescue.

Coast Guard Cutter Alert

Returns Home Following Counter-Drug Patrol, \$83 Million Worth of Cocaine Seized

ASTORIA, Ore. – The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Alert returned home Feb. 1 following a 60-day counter-drug patrol in the Eastern Pacific Ocean, seizing more than \$83 million worth of cocaine during the deployment, the Coast Guard Pacific area said in a Feb. 4 release.

The crew interdicted two suspected drug smuggling vessels, yielding more than 5,700 pounds of seized cocaine while patrolling international waters in support of Joint Interagency Task Force-South. Seven suspected drug traffickers were apprehended during the two interdictions.

The Alert crew received support from the U.S. Navy, Customs and Border Protection and Coast Guard maritime patrol aircrews, who provided the cutter with reconnaissance and over watch leading up to and during the interdictions.

“Coast Guard men and women operating under Joint Interagency Task Force-South, a U.S. Southern Command component, use military hardware and law enforcement authority to interdict smuggling vessels and bring the suspects to justice,” said Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Karl Schultz. “This disrupts key funding sources for these dangerous criminal networks and diminishes their influence in the Western Hemisphere. Aviation forces from the U.S. Navy, U.S. Air Force, U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and others all support this crucial effort.”

A Coast Guard Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron (HITRON) aircrew and an MH-65 dolphin helicopter from

Jacksonville, Florida, deployed aboard Alert throughout the patrol to assist the cutter's boarding teams during the interdictions. When not in pursuit of suspect vessels, the HITRON team helped qualify multiple Alert crewmembers during training evolutions launching and landing helicopters from the cutter's flight deck while underway.

Deployed since early December, Alert's crew spent the holidays at sea. Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard Jason M. Vanderhaden called the cutter to speak with crew members.

"We are fortunate to have such a high-spirited crew, happily celebrating Christmas and New Year's Eve together, at sea for 32 days between liberty stops," said Cmdr. Tobias Reid, Alert's commanding officer. "Between the holidays, two very interesting smuggling cases and our equator crossing ceremony, we had a very full and satisfying patrol. But, above all, we are thankful for the incredible generosity from the Astoria, Warrenton/Hammond and Seaside communities, who provide such tremendous support to our families while we were on patrol."

Commissioned in 1969, Alert is one of 14 remaining 210-foot reliance-class medium-endurance cutters built for the Coast Guard and one of three reliance-class cutters stationed on the West Coast. The cutter and crew perform search and rescue, living marine resource and environmental protection, and counter-drug missions throughout the Pacific Ocean from the U.S.-Canadian border to south of the Galapagos Islands. The fleet of aging medium-endurance cutters are operating beyond the original service lifespan and are becoming increasingly more expensive to maintain and operate.

The Coast Guard will be phasing out medium-endurance cutters with the addition of the 360-foot offshore patrol cutter (OPC). Acquisition of OPCs is one of the Coast Guard's highest investment priorities. The OPC will provide a capability bridge between the 418-foot national security cutter, which patrols the open ocean, and the 154-foot fast response cutter,

which serves closer to shore. The OPCs will feature state-of-the-art technology to meet the service's long-term need for cutters capable of deploying independently or as part of task groups to conduct law enforcement, search and rescue, homeland security, and defense missions. The first OPC is scheduled for delivery in 2021.

The OPC will provide the tools to effectively enforce federal laws, secure our maritime borders, disrupt transnational criminal organizations and respond to 21st century threats," said Schultz. "OPCs will be the backbone of the Coast Guard's strategy to project and maintain an offshore presence."

Coast Guard Interdicts 2 Suspected Drug Smugglers, 132 Pounds of Cocaine

MIAMI – The Coast Guard interdicted two suspected smugglers and approximately 132 pounds of cocaine Thursday 5 miles east of Haulover Inlet, Florida, the Coast Guard 7th District said in a Feb. 1 release.

The Coast Guard Cutter Paul Clark (WPC 1106) crew initially detected a westbound 35-foot pleasure craft approximately 30 miles east of Haulover Inlet.

The Paul Clark boarding team discovered a Bahamian national, hidden under a blanket, along with approximately 132 pounds of cocaine in the vessel's engine room. Initial background checks identified that the Bahamian individual has multiple previous narcotics smuggling convictions and an active United States arrest warrant.

“This successful interdiction is the result of a diligent boarding team who safely stopped two criminals seeking to bring contraband to the streets of South Florida,” said Capt. Megan Dean, commander of Coast Guard Sector Miami. “Our crews continue to maintain a constant presence and work daily with our DHS partner agencies to stop and stem this flow of illicit drugs and human smuggling that threaten our national security.”

The case was turned over to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Homeland Security Investigations (HSI). HSI is the principle investigative arm of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, responsible for investigating transnational crime and threats. HSI special agents investigate, disrupt and dismantle terrorist, transnational and other criminal organizations that threaten or seek to exploit the customs and immigration laws of the United States.

Vigor Selects Vancouver, Washington, Site for a State-of-the-art, All-Aluminum Fabrication Facility

PORTLAND, Ore. – Vigor has entered an agreement to take over the former home of Christensen Yachts in Vancouver, Washington, following a search for the best location to build the U.S. Army’s new landing craft, Maneuver Support Vessel (Light) or MSV(L), the company announced in a Feb. 1 release. The MSV(L) contract represents the largest award in Vigor’s history, with a total value of nearly \$1 billion over 10 years

and hundreds of family-wage jobs.

Vigor expects to eventually employ approximately 400 workers at the site and will be investing millions in capital upgrades and equipment.

In addition to the Army landing craft production, other programs to be constructed at the site will include ongoing production of the Combatant Craft Medium (CCM) for the U.S. Navy as well as for U.S. allies, the Response Boat-Medium (RB-M) for the U.S. Coast Guard and export market, Vigor' Fast Interceptor, aluminum fast ferries and commercial workboats. Vigor's aluminum marine work is currently performed primarily in Seattle (Ballard), Washington, and Clackamas, Oregon. Aluminum marine work in these locations will phase out as work is moved to the Vancouver site over the coming year.

Vigor looked in both Oregon and Washington state at building and buying options for this facility. Local, state and federal leaders in both states showed support throughout the process, demonstrating their commitment to the economic benefits and jobs created by strong manufacturing and maritime sectors in the Pacific Northwest.

"Vigor's decision to keep and grow jobs in Washington state is a testament to the great quality of life and workforce we have available here," said Gov. Jay Inslee. "Our team worked intently with Vigor to find a competitive solution to keep these jobs in Washington, and I'm glad to see the continued success of one of our great corporate citizens contributing to our economy by creating living wage jobs in Vancouver."

The Vancouver site was selected for a number of factors. The opportunity to bring its entire aluminum fabrication team together in one location was a primary driver, coupled with the livability of the community, its proximity to existing Vigor facilities and the suitability of the Christensen facility for Vigor's production needs.

“The synergies we will achieve by bringing these amazing builders together in one location strengthens our competitive advantage and builds upon our long-term goals as an outstanding industrial company,” said Frank Foti, Vigor president and CEO. “While we’ve had operations in Vancouver since 1980, this move represents a substantial increase in the number of Vigor employees who will be living and working here. Our Vigor team looks forward to getting to know the Vancouver community better and being a force for good through our remarkable people and the economic activity associated with our work.”

The approximate timeline is to begin production at the facility in May with existing work followed by the beginning of construction of the MSV(L) prototype in the summer. Once the MSV(L) prototype is completed and testing and refinements have occurred, the schedule calls for four vessels in the Low-Rate Production phase, followed by 32 vessels once Full Rate Production is underway.

Vigor Will Feature Its State-of-the-Art Fast Patrol Craft at NAVDEX 2019

SEATTLE, Wash. – Vigor, the builder of the US Navy’s Combatant Craft Medium and Combatant Craft Heavy as well as the U.S. Coast Guard Response Boat – Medium (RB-M) will feature its new 21-meter patrol boat, the Vigor Fast Inceptor (VFI) at NAVDEX 2019, the company said in a Jan. 30 release. VFI is the next evolution of a proven hull form based on thousands of hours of successful operation. Engineered for superior seakeeping in

challenging environments, high-speed interdiction, addressing swarm threats, UAV launch and retrievals, the craft delivers powerful multimission capabilities with sprint speed of 70 knots.

“The design of VFI is a response to the needs of governmental agencies around the world to achieve the critical missions facing today’s maritime security agencies,” said Bill Blount, Vigor International business development manager. “Our teams have been perfecting performance for the applications and we’re excited to share the result at NAVDEX.” Vigor partnered with Michael Peters Yacht Design (MPYD), known for its pioneering work in high-speed hull forms including offshore racing and patrol craft to deliver a high-performance patrol boat with unequaled control and maneuverability and specifically tailored to the unique environment of the Middle East. The company is already in discussion with multiple government organizations for orders of the VFI and will display a model of the vessel at NAVDEX.

The craft features a hybrid aluminum/composite design, multiple options for remote controlled weapons systems, crewed served weapons mounts and a FLIR night vision system. Suspension seats keep crew and passenger’s mission-ready, and drive-by-wire propulsion and steering controls deliver unequaled control and maneuverability.

Coast Guard Academy Named a Best Value College

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NEW LONDON, Conn., – The U.S. Coast Guard Academy was recently included in

the Princeton Review's "The Best Value Colleges: 200 Schools with Exceptional Return On Investment for Your Tuition Investment" publication, which recommends institutions considered the nation's best for academics, affordability and career prospects, the academy announced in a Jan. 31 release.

According to the publication, the colleges were selected based on a return on investment rating score that includes institutional data from 658 institutions, student surveys, and alumni surveys covering starting and mid-career salaries as well as career social impact.

The publication states, "With a student body of about 1,000, it's easy to see why graduates of the Coast Guard Academy form such a lifelong dedication to the school and each other."

A student survey quotes a cadet saying, "I will have a guaranteed job once I graduate. And I am now part of the military family that takes care of its own."

The academy is a top military college, granting Bachelor of Science degrees in one of nine engineering or professional majors. Cadets pay no tuition and receive a monthly stipend totaling approximately \$12,000 per year. Graduates also earn a commission as an ensign and serve in the U.S. Coast Guard.

**Coast Guard, DEA, Caribbean
Border Interagency Group
Partners Apprehend 4**

Smugglers, Seize \$3 Million in Cocaine

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Margaret Norvell (WPC-1105) offloaded 200 pounds of cocaine Jan. 30 evening and transferred custody of four suspected smugglers to U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration Special agents in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico, the Coast Guard 7th District said in a Jan. 31 release.

Coast Guard and Caribbean Border Interagency Group (CBIG) law enforcement authorities seized the \$3 million dollar cocaine shipment and apprehended the suspected smugglers following the interdiction of a go-fast vessel Tuesday night in waters north of Arecibo, Puerto Rico.

This interdiction is the result of ongoing multi-agency law enforcement efforts in support of Operation Caribbean Guard, the Caribbean Border Interagency Group and the Caribbean Corridor Strike Force (CCSF).

The suspected smugglers are Dominican nationals who are facing likely federal prosecution by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Puerto Rico.

"Tonight's success was a total team effort," said Lt. Carl Luxhoj, Air Station Borinquen MH-65 helicopter pilot. "The combined air support from both the fixed-wing and rotary-wing aircrews made the surface intercept of the suspect vessel possible. The recovery of evidence would not have been possible without the support of the Puerto Rico Police Department [FURA]. The outstanding coordination from all involved prevented illegal migrants and contraband from reaching American soil."

While on a routine patrol, the crew of a HC-144 Ocean Sentry aircraft from Air Station Miami detected a suspicious go-fast

vessel late Jan. 29 night transiting with four people onboard, approximately 20 nautical miles north of Isabela, Puerto Rico. The go-fast was transiting southeast without the use of navigational lights.

Coast Guard Watchstanders in Sector San Juan alerted CBIG partner agencies, launched a MH-65 Dolphin helicopter to provide air support and diverted the Coast

Guard Cutter Margaret Norvell to interdict the go-fast. The crew of a Puerto Rico Police Department FURA marine unit also responded and supported the interdiction.

Throughout the pursuit, the Coast Guard aircrews vectored-in the cutter Margaret Norvell to the go-fast's position. Once on scene, the Norvell's crew launched the cutter's Over-the-Horizon Boat IV that closed-in and interdicted the suspect vessel.

During the pursuit, the HC-144 Ocean Sentry crew observed multiple bales jettisoned into the water from the go-fast. The Coast Guard helicopter also vectored-in the crew of the Puerto Rico Police Department marine unit to the area of the jettisoned cargo, where the crew recovered three bales with 200 pounds of cocaine. The Norvell crew embarked the suspected smugglers along with the seized contraband.

The go-fast was destroyed as a hazard to navigation.

The detainees and seized contraband were transferred to the custody of DEA Special Agents assigned to CCSF, who are leading the investigation into this case.

Coast Guard Patrols South Pacific in Support of International Fisheries

HONOLULU – Following a stop in Fiji in late January, the crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Mellon continued their South Pacific patrol in support of counter-Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported fishing and global security missions, the 14th Coast Guard District said in a Jan. 26 release.

The presence of a high-endurance Coast Guard cutter conducting operations in the region demonstrates the U.S. commitment to regional partnerships and strengthening a coalition of like-minded countries to strengthen regional maritime governance and promote a rules-based regime for fisheries.

Mellon's crew is supporting international fisheries on the high seas and enforcement of the Western Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC). Upon arrival in the WCPFC convention area, they partnered with the Canadian Armed Forces who flew seven reconnaissance flights improving maritime domain awareness and aiding in the enforcement of the WCPFC convention.

Patrolling over 1,110 square miles within the WCPFC convention area, the Mellon's law enforcement team boarded two vessels, one fishing vessel and one bunkering vessel. Both boardings resulted in potential violations of conservation management measures including high seas transshipment and specifications for the marking and identification of fishing vessels.

"Participating in the WCPFC ties into a broader strategy the Coast Guard is pursuing in the Indo-Pacific region," said Capt. Stephen Burdian, commanding officer, cutter Mellon. "Throughout the area, the U.S., and by extension the Coast Guard, is encouraging relationships respecting the

sovereignty, supporting fair and reciprocal trade, and the rule of law in an open and free Oceania. Through a tactical lens, that strategy looks like a Coast Guard boarding of a foreign fishing vessel, while on the high seas or in a sovereign Exclusive Economic Zone jointly with a member of that country's enforcement team. On this patrol, we are fortunate to have excellent support from the U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps, and our Canadian counterparts."

While on a port call in conjunction with the U.S. Embassy in Suva, Fiji, the crew strengthened partnerships with Pacific Islands Nation communities by participating in community relations events at a local animal shelter, children's hospital and garden. At the animal shelter crew members engaged with kittens and puppies while giving animals baths and general clean-up of the shelter. At the children's hospital and garden, the crew read books to children and tidied up the garden area.

Mellon's crew of 150 departed their homeport of Seattle shortly after Christmas. They made a brief stop in Hawaii for fuel and supplies. This stop was leveraged for training as the crew conducted Astern Refueling-at-Sea training with the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Joseph Gerczak.

Also, they worked with Air Station Barbers Point crews to complete 72 shipboard helicopter evolutions over three days, resulting in the qualification of three MH-65 Dolphin helicopter pilots and 10 flight deck personnel aboard Mellon.

The cutter also embarked two Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans officers, two U.S. Navy Aerographer's Mates, and one U.S. Marine Corps Mandarin translator while in Hawaii for the upcoming operations. The crew is more than 8,000 miles into their patrol and have taken every opportunity for professional development with more than 40 crew earning new qualifications.

Oceania covers an area of 3.3 million square miles and has a population of 40 million and is home to some of our valued strategic partners in the Pacific Island Nations as well as Australia and New Zealand, with whom the U.S. has aligned for more than a century.

The importance of the Pacific Islands is very evident as the Coast Guard continues operations in the region and the U.S. strengthens partnerships with the governments of these nations. We recognize tourism and exports, both requiring a great deal of commercial vessel traffic, are a primary economic driver. Tuna represented a nearly \$5 billion industry in 2015 with more than half the world's tuna is sourced from the Western Pacific. In 2017 reported landings were 2.5 million tons of fish.

The presence of a high-endurance cutter in this part of the Pacific to enforce Conservation and Management Measures established by the WCPFC represents the U.S. and the service's commitment to our partnerships in the region. This body represents another essential collaboration. The WCPFC is an international body made up of 43 nations and international organizations. Members agree to allow the 13-enforcer nations in the pact to board and record any potential violations on their nationally flagged vessels. The findings go to the WCPFC who notifies the vessel's flag state of the suspected infraction for further investigation.

"The U.S. Coast Guard and the Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans have a long history of working together to ensure the viability of fish stocks off North America. Working with experts from Canada and regional leaders like Fiji is vital to ensuring food security and the rule of law in Oceania," said Capt. Robert Hendrickson, chief of response for the 14th District. "Working together we are helping to ensure a more secure, free and open Indo-Pacific."