

# Coast Guard, Partners Stop Multiple Smuggling Events off Puerto Rico

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – The Coast Guard interdicted a vessel Jan. 7 with 35 Dominican migrants and 4 kilograms of heroin approximately 34 miles west of Desecheo, Puerto Rico, the 7th Coast Guard District said in a release.

The crew of a Coast Guard Air Station Miami HC-144 Ocean Sentry, deployed to Air Station Borinquen, Puerto Rico, detected the vessel on the evening of Jan. 7. Watchstanders with Coast Guard Sector San Juan diverted the Cutter Heriberto Hernandez, which arrived on scene, embarked the 35 migrants and discovered a backpack with 4 kilograms of heroin floating near the vessel.

“While this interdiction is certainly a success of Coast Guard operational units through Operation Unified Resolve partnered with the Caribbean Border Interagency Group, it is also a symptom of a serious threat to our national security and maritime borders where narcotics smuggling is paired with illegal migrant ventures.” said Capt. Jason Ryan, chief of enforcement for the 7th Coast Guard District.

“Together with other DHS [Department of Homeland Security] components and local law enforcement partners, we will continue to diligently patrol throughout the Caribbean Basin and Florida Straits to stem the flow of maritime smuggling and criminal organizations that bring violence to our shores and fuel the growing epidemic of drug use and overdoses throughout our country.”

On Jan. 10, 27 of the migrants were repatriated to the Dominican Republic, while the remaining eight were transferred into the custody of the Department of Justice’s District of

Puerto Rico for further investigation and possible prosecution. One of the individual's is a suspected smuggler who is being investigated for participation in prior smuggling operations in which several migrants lost their lives.

In the past month, the Coast Guard and partners have made multiple interdictions in the Caribbean. Heriberto Hernandez is a 154-foot fast-response cutter homeported in San Juan.

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## **Coast Guard, HSI, CBP Interdict Suspected Smuggler, Migrants, Drugs**

MIAMI – The Coast Guard, Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) interdicted a sport fisher boat with a suspected smuggler, two migrants, a U.S.-Bahamas dual citizen and 7 kilograms of cocaine Jan. 7 north of Miami, the 7th Coast Guard District said in a release.

At approximately, 5:25 a.m. Coast Guard Sector Miami watchstanders received a report from the Coast Guard Cutter Bernard C. Webber crew stating that they spotted an unlit 46-foot sport fisher boat approximately eight miles east of Dania Beach. The Bernard Webber crew interdicted the vessel to find one Bahamian suspected smuggler, two Bahamian migrants and the dual citizen aboard.

The Bernard C. Webber crew embarked the four persons while one of their small-boat crews drove the sport fisher boat to Coast Guard Station Fort Lauderdale. The Coast Guard, HSI and CBP jointly searched the boat and located 7 kilograms of cocaine.

The Bernard Webber crew later transferred the persons to CBP custody.

“Our partnerships with Customs and Border Protection and Homeland Security Investigations were crucial in the success of this interdiction,” said Petty Officer 1st Class Emily Wilhite, the command duty officer for Coast Guard Sector Miami. “We were able to stop the illegal smuggling of migrants and drugs and will continue to maintain a strong presence in the Florida Straits and Caribbean Sea.”

Federal prosecution has been accepted in the Southern District of Florida.

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## **U.S. Coast Guard Assists Haitian Coast Guard in Stopping Illegal Migrant Voyage**

MIAMI – The U.S. Coast Guard assisted the Haitian Coast Guard in stopping approximately 70 Haitian migrants Jan. 6 approximately 26 miles north of Cap Haïtien, Haiti, the 7th Coast Guard District said in a release.

At approximately 1:30 a.m., the Coast Guard Cutter Vigilant crew sighted a roughly 40-foot Haitian freighter. The Vigilant crew launched a small-boat crew to question the people aboard. Upon detection, the freighter changed course back south to Haiti. The Vigilant crew continued to shadow the vessel while 7th District watchstanders contacted the Haitian Coast Guard. A Haitian Coast Guard marine unit arrived on scene at

approximately 9:30 a.m. and relieved the Vigilant crew.

“This case highlights a critical component to the success of curbing illegal immigration in the Caribbean and that is of our international partners, and in this case specifically, the Haitian Coast Guard,” said Capt. Aldante Vinciguerra, chief of response for the 7th District. “The close cooperation between both U.S. Coast Guard and Haitian Coast Guard operational teams in this instance helped prevent a dangerous and ill-advised illegal migrant voyage from potentially capsizing and ending tragically as we unfortunately have seen happen recently.

“The U.S. Coast Guard has maintained a continual presence in the Florida straits and Caribbean basin and will continue to do so to detect, deter, and stop these illegal and unsafe voyages.”

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## **HII Awarded Contracts to Build Two More National Security Cutters**

PASCAGOULA, Miss. – Huntington Ingalls Industries’ (HII’s) Ingalls Shipbuilding division has received two fixed-price incentive contracts from the U.S. Coast Guard to build two additional National Security Cutters (NSCs), the company said in a Dec. 21 release. The contract values for the a 10th and 11th ships in the program are \$468.75 million for NSC 10 and \$462.13 million for NSC 11.

“This additional funding for two NSCs is a great accomplishment on which to end the year,” said Ingalls

Shipbuilding President Brian Cuccias. “The outstanding work being done by skilled men and women of Ingalls, as well as the recognition by Congress and the U.S. Coast Guard as to the important contributions these ships make to our nation’s defense, are the reason for this success. These ships provide capable assets that our Coast Guard customer uses to perform essential homeland security missions, and we look forward to delivering two more quality NSCs to help with this important work.”

Ingalls has delivered seven NSCs, the flagships of the Coast Guard’s cutter fleet, designed to replace the 12 Hamilton-class high-endurance cutters that entered service in the 1960s. The seventh ship, Kimball (WMSL 756), will be commissioned in Hawaii on Jan. 19.

Both the eighth ship, Midgett (WMSL 757), and the ninth, Stone (WMSL 758), are currently under construction at Ingalls. Midgett is scheduled for its first set of sea trials in the first quarter of 2019. Stone is scheduled to launch in 2019. NSCs are 418 feet long with a 54-foot beam and displace 4,500 tons with a full load. They have a top speed of 28 knots, a range of 12,000 miles, an endurance of 60 days and a crew of 120.

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## **Coast Guard Cutter Mohawk Returns to Key West After 42-Day Patrol**

KEY WEST, Fla. – The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Mohawk, homeported in Key West, returned Sunday following a 42-day patrol in the Caribbean Sea, the 7th Coast Guard District said

in a Dec. 24 release.

The cutter crew worked with multiple Customs and Border Protection and U.S. Navy maritime patrol aircraft while countering transnational criminal organizations attempting to smuggle drugs, humans and other dangerous cargoes to the United States.

Over the course of the patrol, Mohawk's crew, complimented by a deployable specialized forces team from U.S. Coast Guard Tactical Law Enforcement Team South, successfully interdicted and seized nearly \$17 million of cocaine.

Part of the cutter's duties included a four-day engagement with the Guatemalan Naval Forces to exchange tactics and best practices, strengthening the collaborative efforts of regional security partners. Furthermore, crew members spent over 20 hours restoring a local K-12 community school to make it more habitable for the students. These efforts resulted in a new roof for one of the buildings, the rejuvenation of athletic and bathroom facilities, and the repainting of one of the classrooms.

"Additionally, Mohawk's crew conducted daily damage control, navigation, and combat drills to ensure the cutter remains ready to save lives, defend our nation and enforce federal laws," said Ensign Kira Dabrowski, public affairs officer aboard the cutter. "Upon our return to homeport, the crew will continue to work diligently to prepare to return to sea and continue to serve the American people."

The Mohawk is a 270-foot Famous-class cutter named after the Algonquin tribe of the Iroquoian Indians who lived in the Mohawk Valley of New York.

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# Cutter Resolute Returns Home After 59-Day Patrol

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. – The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Resolute returned home Dec. 31 to St. Petersburg following a 59-day patrol, the 7th Coast Guard District said in a release.

Resolute crew members patrolled more than 9,000 miles providing a law enforcement presence in the Caribbean Ocean in the vicinity of Hispaniola and Puerto Rico while deterring illegal migrant departures and playing a role in several Coast Guard operations.

“After spending the holidays deployed, Resolute crew members are ready to be home with family and friends to celebrate the new year,” said Cmdr. Roy R. Brubaker, commanding officer of the Resolute. “As always, the crew performed remarkably well amidst challenging weather conditions and mission demands.”

During the patrol, the Resolute crew participated in a four-day operation targeting illicit flow of narcotics off the coast of Jamaica. At the conclusion of the operation, the Resolute crew transitioned to support Operation Unified Resolve and team with Coast Guard Sector San Juan crew members. Their joint efforts resulted in the interdiction of nine Dominican migrants attempting to illegally enter Puerto Rico. Crew members also patrolled the Windward Passage thus providing an overt presence and deterring illegal migration off the north coast of Haiti.

While conducting a port visit in Ocho Rios, Jamaica, Resolute crew members, and personnel of the U.S. Embassy Kingston staff, hosted the Mayor Councillor Michael Belnavis along with 80 students from Ocho Rios Primary School. The tour provided an opportunity for Jamaican youth to learn about the Coast Guard and see aspects of sea-going life first-hand.

In the final days of patrol, the crew served as on-scene commander in a 37-hour search for a missing cruise ship crew member. Search crews saturated 105 square nautical miles, but the crew member was not recovered.

The Resolute is a 210-foot Reliance-class cutter and has a crew of 78.

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## **Munro Returns Home from 105-Day Western Pacific Patrol**

ALAMEDA, Calif. – The crew aboard Coast Guard Cutter Munro returned Dec. 24 to their homeport in Alameda after a 105-day, 17,000-nautical mile, multimission deployment to the Western Pacific Ocean, according to the Coast Guard Pacific Area.

The crew conducted a Western Pacific Living Marine Resources patrol during the 105-day deployment. Munro's law enforcement teams conducted 10 at-sea inspections of foreign-flag fishing vessels on the high seas to counter illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing practices in the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission area.

"The crew worked tirelessly to execute 10 fisheries boardings, 186 flight evolutions and dozens of boat operations in support of fisheries enforcement which demonstrates U.S. presence in the Western Pacific," said Munro's commanding officer Capt. Jim Estramonte. "Munro's successful deployment paves the way for future Coast Guard Oceania patrols. Having the opportunity to bring the cutter to Guadalcanal, a place of Coast Guard lore, made the patrol even more meaningful for the crew."

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# Coast Guard Repatriates 41 Migrants to the Dominican Republic

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – The Coast Guard repatriated 15 migrants Dec. 21 and 26 others Dec. 20 to the Dominican Republic, following the interdiction of four migrant vessels in Mona Passage waters off the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, the 7th Coast Guard District said in a release.

The interdictions were a result of ongoing efforts in support of Operation Unified Resolve, Operation Caribbean Guard and the Caribbean Border Interagency Group (CBIG).

“Crossing the perilous waters of the Mona Passage aboard grossly overloaded makeshift boats with no life-saving equipment onboard is extremely dangerous and a potentially life-threatening situation,” said Cmdr. Christopher Douglas, Coast Guard Sector San Juan chief of response. “The excellent interagency collaboration between the responding local and federal agencies led to the successful interdiction of all four migrant vessels and the safe recovery of 41 migrants.”

“Ramey Border Patrol Sector has adjusted its presence in key locations around Puerto Rico, in response to the increased activity in our area,” said Xavier Morales, Ramey Sector chief patrol agent in Aguadilla. “It is usual to see an increase in smuggling activities during the holiday season. Smugglers have the perception that law enforcement decreases during this period, however our agents remain vigilant, working 24 hours, seven days a week.”

The crew of a Customs and Border Protection (CBP) DHC-8

maritime patrol aircraft detected the first migrant vessel Dec. 17 transiting without navigational lights, approximately 11 nautical miles north of Aguadilla, Puerto Rico. Coast Guard watchstanders in Sector San Juan diverted the Cutter Joseph Tezanos, while a CBP Caribbean Air and Marine and a Puerto Rico Police Joint Forces of Rapid Action marine unit also responded to interdict the suspect vessel.

The crew of the CBP marine unit arrived on scene and interdicted the 30-foot makeshift boat with eight migrants onboard, six men and two women, who claimed Dominican nationality. Joseph Tezanos arrived on scene soon thereafter, embarked the migrants and later transferred them to the Cutter Joseph Napier. Joseph Napier transported the migrants to La Romana, Dominican Republic, where they were repatriated and transferred to Dominican Republic Navy authorities Dec. 20.

Joseph Napier interdicted a second migrant vessel Dec. 20, after the crew of a patrolling CBP DHC-8 detected a 25-foot boat transiting toward Puerto Rico, approximately 15 nautical miles east southeast of Isla Saona, Dominican Republic. The crew embarked 18 migrant adults from the makeshift boat, 16 men and 2 women, who claimed Dominican nationality. Joseph Napier rendezvoused with a Dominican Navy patrol vessel on Dec. 20 in waters south of Santo Domingo, where the crew embarked and received custody of the migrants.

Ramey Sector U.S. Border Patrol agents detected a third and fourth migrant vessel early Dec.20, approximately eight nautical miles north of Desecheo Island, Puerto Rico. Coast Guard watchstanders in Sector San Juan diverted the Cutter Winslow Griesser, which responded along with two Puerto Rico Police Joint Forces of Rapid Action marine units to interdict the suspect

vessels. A patrolling CBP Caribbean Air and Marine DHC-8 vectored-in the police units that closed-in and stopped both migrant vessels.

One of the interdicted vessels was carrying seven men, while the other was carrying eight, who claimed Dominican nationality. Winslow Griesser arrived on scene shortly thereafter and safely embarked the migrants from both vessels. The cutter rendezvoused with a Dominican Navy patrol vessel Dec. 21 in waters just off Samana, Dominican Republic, where the crew embarked and received custody of the migrants.

Once aboard a Coast Guard cutter, all migrants receive food, water, shelter and basic medical attention.

Winslow Griesser, Joseph Napier and Joseph Tezanos are 154-foot fast response cutters homeported in San Juan.

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## **National Security Cutter Kimball Arrives at New Homeport in Hawaii**

HONOLULU – The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Kimball arrived at its new homeport of Honolulu Dec. 22, according to the 14th Coast Guard District.

Kimball is the seventh of the Coast Guard's national security cutters (NSCs) and the first to be homeported in Hawaii. The vessel is arriving following a transit from Pascagoula, Mississippi, where it was built.

A second NSC will arrive next year. Known as the Legend-class, NSCs are designed to be the flagships of the Coast Guard's fleet, capable of executing the most challenging national security missions, including support to U.S. combatant commanders. NSCs are 418 feet in length, 54 feet in beam and

4,600 long tons in displacement. They have a top speed of more than 28 knots, a range of 12,000 nautical miles, an endurance of up to 90 days and can hold a crew of up to 150. These new cutters are replacing the aging high-endurance Hamilton-class cutters (378 feet) that have been in service since the 1960s.

Kimball will routinely conduct operations from South America to the Bering Sea. The cutter's unmatched combination of range, speed, and ability to operate in extreme weather provide it the mission flexibility necessary to conduct alien migrant interdiction operations, domestic fisheries protection, search and rescue, counter-narcotics and homeland security operations at great distances from shore, keeping threats far from the U.S. mainland.

The cutter's namesake is Sumner J. Kimball. While Kimball was not a member of the Coast Guard, he was appointed the superintendent of the Life-Saving Service, a predecessor service of the Coast Guard. Kimball reformed the Revenue Cutter Service and established a training school for young officers that would later develop into the U.S. Coast Guard Academy. His efforts to transform the collection of facilities around the U.S. coastline led to a coherent and well-trained organization.

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## **Coast Guard Concludes Maritime Security Ops for Economic Leaders Week**

ALAMEDA, Calif. – U.S. Coast Guard members recently completed loading six small boats and accompanying equipment onboard the USS Green Bay in Townsville, Australia, for transport back to

the United States.

The loadout follows the Coast Guard's recent deployment to Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea (PNG) where 94 Coast Guard personnel logged more than 2,000 underway hours providing round-the-clock maritime security during the 2018 Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Economic Leaders Week, Nov. 12-18. The high-profile summit was attended by leaders and senior officials from 21 nations, including Vice President Mike Pence representing the United States.

A first-of-its kind Memorandum of Understanding signed by U.S. Ambassador Catherine Ebert-Gray and PNG Police Commissioner Gary Baki provided temporary authority for the Coast Guard to deploy small boats and specialized members as part of an adaptive force package (ADF) that provided port security, waterside protection, and anti-terrorism capabilities prior to and during the summit.

Operating under the control of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, the ADF worked in cooperation with PNG's Joint Security Task Force and the Australian Defense Forces.

The ADF was led by Port Security Unit (PSU) 305, based in Fort Eustis, Virginia, and included Reserve and active-duty service members from PSU 301 based in Cape Cod, Massachusetts, PSU 308 based in Kiln, Mississippi, and PSU 313 based in Everett, Washington, along with Maritime Safety and Security Team (MSST) Honolulu, MSST Seattle, MSST San Francisco and MSST Los Angeles/Long Beach.

"As a global leader in maritime law enforcement and port security, the U.S. Coast Guard was proud to work with the PNG Joint Security Task Force and our Pacific partners to ensure safety and security throughout the APEC Economic Leaders Week," said Cmdr. Michael McCarthy, commanding officer of PSU 305.

The deployed service members and their international partners

conducted waterway security at three separate maritime restricted areas around Port Moresby including waterways surrounding the APEC Haus, the main venue during the summit, and several cruise ships which served as lodging for global leaders and dignitaries during the summit.

Throughout the deployment the ADF operated from the Royal Australian Navy's HMAS Adelaide, a 757-ft long Australian amphibious assault ship equipped with a well deck that

allowed for launching and recovering the Coast Guard's six 32-foot transportable port security boats.

Coast Guard personnel participated with their international partners in a Remembrance Day Ceremony Nov. 11 commemorating the 100th anniversary of World War I on the Adelaide's helicopter landing deck.

The APEC security mission is one of several recent joint operations conducted by the Coast Guard in the Western Pacific. In August, the service participated in the 17th annual Southeast Asia Cooperation and Training exercise, which brought together service members from navies and coast guards from nine nations to focus on increasing maritime domain awareness through collaborative and coordinated information sharing.

The Coast Guard is also engaged in the Oceania Maritime Security Initiative, with law enforcement detachments deployed on supporting U.S. Naval vessels such as the USS Shoup, assisting Pacific nations with protecting their exclusive economic zones and combating illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

"The United States is a Pacific nation," said Vice Adm. Linda Fagan, commander, Coast Guard Pacific Area. "We have deep and long-standing ties with our partners in the region, and more importantly, we share a strong commitment to a free and open Pacific, governed by a rules-based international system that

promotes peace, security, and shared prosperity.”