

Coast Guard Cutter Forward Returns Home after Drug-Busting Patrol



Coast Guard Cutter Forward and Coast Guard Cutter Bear, homeported in Portsmouth, Virginia, finish an at-sea transfer while underway on a two-month patrol. Coast Guard Cutter Forward returned to homeport on April 10, 2021. *U.S. COAST GUARD*

PORTSMOUTH, Va. – The Coast Guard Cutter Forward (WMEC 911) returned to its homeport in Portsmouth April 12 after a two-month patrol in the Eastern Pacific Ocean, working to suppress and eradicate the movement of illegal drugs in the region, the Coast Guard 5th District said in an April 13 release.

The crew of the Forward worked in conjunction with U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Air and Marine Operations (AMO) and the Canadian Navy to execute the mission, resulting in the seizure of 6,800 pounds of cocaine, 5,300 pounds of marijuana, two pounds of methamphetamine and the detainment of 14 suspected drug smugglers.

“These deployments highlight our successful interoperability with multiple domestic and international partners all committed to curbing the flow of illegal drugs to our borders,” said Lt. Vincent Zieser, the operations officer and lead coordinator aboard the Forward. “We certainly enjoyed their support and teamwork.”

U.S. Southern Command began what was then known as Enhanced Counter-Narcotics Operations in the Western Hemisphere to increase drug traffic disruption on April 1, 2020. This counter Transnational Criminal Organizations operational approach, which is now enduring, supports objectives to degrade the capabilities of TCOs and ultimately save lives.

With increased presence, collaborative efforts have bolstered support to U.S. and partner nations' law enforcement agencies by sharing information and intelligence. Key partners have been involved in over 60% of drug disruptions since April 2020, an increase of 50% from 2019. By strengthening partnerships, we maximize regional coverage and increase effectiveness.

There are numerous U.S. agencies from the Departments of Defense, Justice and Homeland Security cooperated 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 drug cartels in the Eastern Pacific Ocean requires unity of effort in all phases from detection, monitoring and interdictions, to criminal prosecutions by international partners and U.S. Attorneys' Offices in districts across the nation. The law enforcement phase of counter-smuggling operations in the Eastern Pacific Ocean is conducted under the authority of the 11th Coast Guard District, headquartered in Alameda. The interdictions, including the actual boardings, are led and conducted by members of the U.S. Coast Guard

The Forward is a 270-foot medium-endurance cutter homeported in Portsmouth. The cutter's primary mission includes search and rescue, illegal drug interdictions, alien migrant interdictions, ensuring safety of life at sea and enforcing international and domestic maritime laws.