

Coast Guard Cutter Hamilton Returns Home after 60-Day Patrol



A Coast Guard Cutter Hamilton crew interdicts a go-fast vessel in the Eastern Pacific Ocean, August 19, 2020. U.S. COAST GUARD

CHARLESTON, S.C. – The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Hamilton (WMSL-753) returned home Friday to Charleston after completing a 60-day patrol throughout the Eastern Pacific Ocean, the Coast Guard 7th District said in an Aug. 28 release.

The crew offloaded \$228 million worth of cocaine and marijuana Thursday at Port Everglades.

Hamilton's crew interdicted nine drug-laden vessels while patrolling the Eastern Pacific Ocean. Described as "go-fast" vessels, they intentionally travel at high speeds trying to avoid interdiction. Hamilton's law enforcement team detained all 25 suspects, transferred six others and handed them all over to Federal authorities for potential prosecution.

During one of the interdictions, Hamilton's crew worked alongside the USS Nitze, an Arleigh Burke-class destroyer homeported in Norfolk, Virginia to interdict a go-fast vessel 76 miles South of Panama. The Nitze deployed with a Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment Team which enables Navy ships to conduct counter-drug operations and enforce U.S. laws. Nitze launched their MH-60 Seahawk helicopter to provide airborne support and disable the vessel while Hamilton's boarding team conducted the law enforcement boarding. The teamwork between Nitze and Hamilton led to the seizure of 1,500 kilograms of cocaine and apprehension of three suspected drug smugglers.

“We are proud to support the President’s national security strategy by keeping illegal drugs off American streets. Our efforts also degrade transnational criminal organizations, bring stability to Central America, and increase interoperability with our partner nations,” said Capt. Timothy Cronin, commanding officer of Hamilton. “I am extremely proud of this crew how they managed to sail short-handed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and still deliver tremendous results.”

The Coast Guard Cutter Hamilton is one of two 418-foot National Security Cutters (NSC) homeported in Charleston. With its robust command, control, communication, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance equipment, the NSC is the most technologically advanced ship in the Coast Guard’s fleet. NSCs are equipped with three state-of-the-art small boats and a stern boat launch system, dual aviation facilities, and serve as an afloat command and control platform for complex law enforcement and national security missions involving the Coast Guard and numerous partner agencies.

Hamilton’s crew, along with an aviation detachment from the Coast Guard’s Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron, began her deployment in early July as part of a partnership falling under Joint Interagency Task Force (JIATF) South, a component of U.S. Southern Command. JIATF South, located in Key West, oversees the detection and monitoring of illicit traffickers and assists U.S. and multi-national law enforcement agencies with the interdiction of these activities.