

# Coast Guard Cutter Hamilton Returns Home After Drug-Busting Patrol



The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Hamilton returned home to Charleston after completing an 80-day patrol throughout the eastern Pacific Ocean on April 5. Crews offloaded \$324 million worth of cocaine and marijuana. U.S. Coast Guard

CHARLESTON, S.C. – The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Hamilton returned home on April 6 to Charleston after completing an 80-day patrol throughout the eastern Pacific Ocean, according to the Coast Guard 7th District.

The crew offloaded \$324 million worth of cocaine and marijuana April 3 at Port Everglades, Florida.

Hamilton's crew, along with an aviation detachment from the Coast Guard's Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron, began their deployment in late January by serving as the first national security cutter (NSC) to participate in a Navy Composite Training Unit Exercise.

For three weeks, Hamilton integrated with the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower and ships and aircraft of Carrier Strike Group 10 to test the strike group's ability to carry out sustained combat operations at sea. Hamilton's commanding officer, Capt. Timothy Cronin, said the event highlighted the capabilities of the 418-foot NSC.

"Our success in this critical exercise demonstrated how the Coast Guard can seamlessly integrate with joint forces around the globe to advance our national security strategy," Cronin said.

During February, Hamilton deployed to the eastern Pacific as

part of a partnership that falls under the Joint Interagency Task Force (JIATF) South, a component of U.S. Southern Command. JIATF South oversees the detection and monitoring of illicit traffickers and assists law enforcement agencies with interdiction.

Hamilton's crew seized three drug-laden vessels and apprehended eight suspected traffickers. Two of the vessels were semi-submersibles, vessels built low to the waterline to avoid detection. The two suspected smugglers purposely scuttled their vessel in an alleged attempt to prevent Hamilton's crew from locating any contraband. Hamilton's law-enforcement team detained the suspects and turned them over to the Drug Enforcement Agency for potential prosecution.

Hamilton also assisted in the removal of another seven tons of cocaine and 1,400 pounds of marijuana seized from a heavily trafficked transit zone by Coast Guard Cutters Legare, Vigilant, Tampa, Tahoma, Steadfast, Mohawk, Navy vessel USS Tornado, and the Canadian vessel HMCS Nanaimo.