

Coast Guard Cutter Vigilant Interdicts Approximately 6,800 Pounds of Cocaine



The Coast Guard Cutter Vigilant crew seized a total of 122 bales of cocaine in back-to-back interdictions of go-fast vessels just off the coast of Limon, Costa Rica, June 15, 2020. U.S. COAST GUARD

CARIBBEAN SEA – The Coast Guard Cutter Vigilant (WMEC-617) crew seized a total of 122 bales of cocaine June 15 in back-to-back interdictions of go-fast vessels just off the coast of Limon, Costa Rica, the Coast Guard 7th District said in a June 19 release.

The forward-deployed Coast Guard MH-65 Dolphin helicopter crew aboard the Vigilant successfully disabled the first go-fast vessel and observed the crew throwing packages overboard.

Once on scene, the boarding team discovered four people aboard and recovered 77 bales, or approximately 4,200 pounds, of cocaine from the water. Immediately following the first interdiction, the helicopter crew and a separate cutter boarding team were vectored to a 34-foot go-fast vessel with five people aboard.

The helicopter crew successfully disabled the second go-fast vessel and also observed the crew throwing packages overboard. Vigilant's boarding team arrived on scene, apprehended five people and recovered 45 bales or approximately 2,600 pounds of cocaine from the water.

The cocaine recovered during both interdictions has an estimated wholesale value of approximately \$118.3 million. The nine people will be prosecuted by the Middle District of Florida and the seized contraband will be transferred to the

Drug Enforcement Administration.

“Every high-speed interdiction of drug-laden vessels presents unique challenges, so for us to simultaneously interdict two overpowered go-fast vessels in the middle of the night is extraordinary,” said Cmdr. Fred Bertsch, commanding officer of the Vigilant. “I am very proud of our crew and could not have asked anything more from them. These efforts, combined with those of our partner agencies and nations, will help ensure stability in the Western Hemisphere.”

Once aboard a Coast Guard cutter, all detainees receive food, water, shelter and basic medical attention. Throughout the interdiction Coast Guard crew members were equipped with personal protective equipment to minimize potential exposure to any possible case of COVID-19. No detainees were reported to be sick or to have any COVID-19 related symptoms.