

# Coast Guard Cutters Begin Operation Aiga in Oceania



The crew of the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Joseph Gerczak (WPC 1126), shown here on patrol off the coast of Waikiki, July 4, 2018. *U.S. COAST GUARD / Petty Officer 3rd Class Matthew West*  
HONOLULU – The crews of the Coast Guard Cutter Juniper (WLB 201) and Joseph Gerczak (WPC 1126) will aim to extend the Coast Guard’s at-sea enforcement presence in the region through a 40-day patrol, the Coast Guard 14th District said Jan. 19.

“Aiga,” the Samoan word for family, is designed to integrate Coast Guard capabilities and operations with Pacific Island Country partners to protect shared national interests, combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing and strengthen maritime governance in Oceania.

“Responsible fisheries management is vital to the Pacific’s well-being, prosperity, and security,” said Lt. Cmdr. Jessica Conway, the 14th District’s current operations officer. “The Coast Guard is an adaptable, responsive military force of maritime professionals whose broad legal authorities, capable assets, and expansive partnerships provide a persistent presence throughout our exclusive economic zones and on the high seas.”

IUU fishing operates outside the rules adopted at the national and international level. It threatens the ocean’s ecosystem, food security, and economic growth around the world by undercutting law-abiding fishermen and communities that depend on fish and fish products.

“An essential protein source for more than 40% of the world’s population, fish stocks are critical to maritime sovereignty and resource security of many nations,” said Cmdr. Christopher

Jasnoch, the Juniper's commanding officer.

As part of Operation Blue Pacific 2022, the crews of the Juniper and Joseph Gerczak will conduct information sharing activities to advance the U.S.'s bilateral and cultural relationships with Melanesia and Polynesia.

The Coast Guard regularly exercises bilateral shiprider agreements with partner nations. These agreements help to host foreign law enforcement personnel to better exercise their authority, close any global maritime law enforcement gaps, and improve cooperation, coordination, and interoperability.

Operation Blue Pacific is an overarching multi-mission Coast Guard endeavor seeking to promote maritime security, safety, sovereignty and economic prosperity in Oceania while also strengthening relationships with our partners in the region.

"To ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific, the U.S. remains committed to strengthening regional alliances and enhancing emerging partnerships," said Lt. Joseph Blinsky, Joseph Gerczak's commanding officer. "Leading global deterrence efforts, the Coast Guard likewise remains committed to combating IUU fishing and our crews look forward to collaborating with PICs to better address this growing national security concern."