

Cutter Bear Returns Home After Interdicting \$140+ Million of Illicit Drugs



Coast Guard Cutter Bear personnel offload approximately 2,300 lbs of cocaine worth more than \$43.7 million at Port Everglades in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, April 20, 2021. On April 1, 2020, U.S. Southern Command began what was then known as Enhanced Counter Narcotics (CN) Operations in the Western Hemisphere to increase the disruption of drugs. *U.S. COAST GUARD photo by Chief Petty Officer Charly Tautfest*

PORTSMOUTH, Va. – The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Bear (WMEC 901) returned home to Portsmouth Sunday following an 86-day counter-drug patrol in the Eastern Pacific Ocean, the Coast Guard 5th District said in an April 26 release.

The Bear's crew interdicted three vessels, seized approximately 8,158 pounds of cocaine, two pounds of methamphetamines, as well as marijuana, worth a combined total of over \$140 million, and detained 12 suspected drug smugglers.

The Bear's crew also coordinated operations with the U.S. Coast Guard's Tactical Law Enforcement Team South Law Enforcement Detachment (LEDET-108), who were deployed aboard the HMCS Saskatoon, a Kingston-class coastal defense vessel from the Canadian Navy. The collaboration supported LEDET-108's seizure of an additional 2,866 pounds of cocaine and the detention of three suspected smugglers.

A flight crew and aviation detachment from the Coast Guard's Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron (HITRON), deployed aboard the Bear for the patrol. HITRON crews specialize in airborne use of force, and are based out of Jacksonville, Florida. The crew of the Bear worked in preparation for the

counter-narcotics mission, partaking in numerous flight operations to recertify the flight crew and enhance crew proficiency in shipboard helicopter operations and non-complaint vessel training.

The Bear's crew departed Portsmouth to conduct joint training exercises with the U.S. Navy on January 31. The Bear supported the Navy's training exercise while operating off the coast of Virginia and the Carolinas, and the crew took advantage of the unique opportunity to become more proficient at wartime steaming.

"I am extremely proud of this crew and honored to be their commanding officer," said Cmdr. Jeff Ferlauto, the Bear's commanding officer. "It's been an extremely successful deployment and the crew met each challenge head-on. Since our initial transit through the Panama Canal into the Eastern Pacific, this crew dominated! As we get ready for the home stretch, I want to personally thank all the families and friends for their continued support. I realize that our personal lives and our devotion to duty are in constant tension. We have chosen to serve our country and execute missions that take us far from home and require extended absences from our loved ones."

The Bear is a 270-foot medium-endurance cutter homeported in Portsmouth.