

Cutter Legare Returns Home after Interdicting over 7,000 Pounds of Drugs



The Coast Guard Cutter Legare (WMEC 912) crew transferred 19 suspected smugglers to federal agents at Port Everglades, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, Dec. 7, 2020. The Legare crew patrolled the Eastern Pacific Ocean in support of an enhanced counter-narcotics operations in the Western Hemisphere to disrupt the flow of drugs in support of Presidential National Security Objectives. U.S. Coast Guard / Chief Petty Officer Charly Tautfest

PORTSMOUTH, Va. – The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Legare returned to their homeport in Portsmouth, after an eight-week counter narcotic patrol in the Eastern Pacific Ocean, Dec. 11, the Coast Guard 5th District said in a release.

The Legare interdicted over 7,000 pounds of contraband, with an estimated street value in excess of \$20 million and patrolled over 10,000 nautical miles throughout the Eastern Pacific, working in conjunction with U.S. Customs and Border Protection, the Drug Enforcement Administration, U.S. Navy, and other partner assets to combat transnational smuggling organizations operating in the maritime environment.

The Legare embarked an aircrew from Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron, homeported in Jacksonville, Florida, which specializes in airborne interdiction tactics. Additionally, the crew sailed with a law enforcement detachment specializing in maritime law enforcement and surface use of force tactics.

Along with 4th Fleet assets, the Legare participated in an international naval and amphibious exercises off the coast of Manta, Ecuador. Unitas, or “Unity” in Latin, is the longest running annual international military exercise. The Legare

crew demonstrated the Coast Guard's multi-faceted capabilities during maritime interdiction, search and rescue, and live fire gunnery exercise events in addition to participating in atypical Coast Guard events such as anti-submarine and surface warfare operations.

"Similar to our previous patrol, the COVID-19 pandemic has continued to challenge our methodology and tactics, despite this, the crew always rises to the challenge ensuring protective equipment and decontamination procedures are strictly followed allowing the Legare to complete and excel in all missions," said Cmdr. Malcolm Belt, commanding officer of the Legare. "Despite all of the restrictions COVID-19 has brought upon us, the men and women of the Legare prepared for and performed magnificently during the Uritas exercise, an opportunity for the United States to strengthen alliances with other nations and enhance our capabilities across international borders. I am continually amazed by the families and friends shore side who support the crew serving onboard the Legare, their resolve, strength, and compassion allow the crew to focus on the mission while deployed; we would not be where we are today without their constant and unwavering support."

The Legare is a multi-mission 270-foot medium-endurance cutter. Missions include search and rescue, maritime law enforcement, marine environmental protection, homeland security, and national defense operations.