

Cutter Returns Home following Eastern Pacific Law-Enforcement Patrol



The USCGC Alert (WMEC 127) and its crew return to homeport in Astoria, Oregon, Wednesday, April 7, 2021, following a 63-day patrol that began in early February. The cutter and crew patrolled off the coast of Mexico and in the vicinity of the United States-Mexico Maritime Boundary Line enforcing international laws and treaties to disrupt illegal narcotics and migrant smuggling. U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Cynthia Oldham.

ASTORIA, Ore. – The Coast Guard Cutter Alert (WMEC 630) returned home to Astoria, Oregon, April 7 following a 63-day counterdrug patrol in the Eastern Pacific Ocean, the Coast Guard Pacific Area said in a release.

Working in conjunction with different Coast Guard and Mexican law enforcement agencies, Alert's crew disrupted more than 2,100 pounds of cocaine, valued at over \$41 million wholesale, from entering the United States.

The Oregon-based cutter and crew patrolled international waters off the coast of Mexico and the United States-Mexico Maritime Boundary Line, enforcing international laws and treaties throughout their deployment and disrupting the flow of illegal narcotics and migrant smuggling.

While on patrol, a maritime patrol aircraft spotted a suspected smuggling vessel. Alert's crews launched both cutter small boats and pursued the vessel until it ran out of fuel. The case was transferred to Mexican law enforcement officials from the Secretaría de Marina (SEMAR).

Through the collaborative and international team effort, the smugglers were successfully apprehended, and 1,600 pounds of

illegal narcotics seized by Mexican Law Enforcement.

Within 48 hours, Alert's crew identified another law enforcement case for interdiction and changed course to intercept the suspected smuggling vessel. After a multi-hour pursuit, the crew successfully interdicted approximately 550 pounds of cocaine and apprehended six suspected narco-traffickers for prosecution in the United States.

Numerous U.S. agencies from the Departments of Defense, Justice and Homeland Security cooperated in the effort to combat transnational organized crime. The Coast Guard, Navy, Customs and Border Protection, FBI, Drug Enforcement Administration, and Immigration and Customs Enforcement, along with allied and international partner agencies, play a role in counter-drug operations.

Alert's crew transferred the seized narcotics and suspected drug traffickers to the Department of Justice, via Coast Guard Station San Diego March 1 before steaming north to complete their three-week Tailored Ship Training Assessment, a bi-annual assessment designed to evaluate the cutter's training teams and operational readiness.

"Once again, the crew of Alert was able to overcome the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and equipment failures on a 50-year-old ship to execute a wide range of Coast Guard missions from the US-Canada Border to the Mexico-Guatemala border over a two-month period," said Cmdr. Tyson Scofield, Alert's commanding officer. "Overall, Coast Guard Cutter Alert successfully completed a variety of operations through the combined effort of every member of the crew."

While patrolling the Eastern Pacific, Alert's watchstanders identified a sea turtle entangled in fishing debris. The cutter maneuvered into position and launched its small boat to help the endangered sea animal, ultimately setting the sea turtle free from the entwined

debris. Marine environmental protection is a statutory mission of the Coast Guard and every year approximately 300 sea turtles are saved by the Coast Guard.

“Marine life has always had a special place in my heart. When the opportunity to save a turtle arose, I was beyond excited to help,” said Petty Officer Third Class Timothy Waters who was aboard the small board to help free the entangled sea turtle. “I am honored to have done something so small that contributes to something much larger than me.”