

Cutter Stratton Returns to Alameda Following 97-Day South Pacific Patrol



Petty Officer 2nd Class Jose MataAyala, a machinery technician stationed on the Coast Guard Cutter Stratton, observes unqualified crew members as they participate in man-overboard drills off the coast of the Hawaiian Islands, Dec, 31, 2021. *U.S. COAST GUARD / Petty Officer 3rd Class David Graham*

ALAMEDA, Calif. – The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Stratton (WMSL 752) returned to Alameda, California, March 19 after completing an Operation Blue Pacific Patrol in the south Pacific, the Coast Guard Pacific Area said in a release.

While underway, Stratton's crew worked with Pacific partner nations, including Fiji, France, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Australia and the United Kingdom on an array of missions and prioritized combating illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing on the high seas or in partner nations' exclusive economic zones.

In the effort to combat IUU fishing, Stratton teams boarded 11 vessels during the 20,348-mile patrol and found 21 violations.

"Our collaboration with our partners and utilization of our shiprider agreements gave us the ability to accomplish our mission of combatting illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in order to maintain regional stability and protect the fishing industry," said Capt. Steve Adler, Stratton's commanding officer. "By bringing aboard shipriders from Fiji, we were able to patrol their exclusive economic zones to better assist them in enforcing their maritime laws."

In February, Stratton embarked three shipriders from Fiji with

representatives from the Fiji Revenue and Customs Services, the Fiji Ministry of Fisheries and the Republic of Fiji Navy, who led bilateral enforcement efforts for Stratton to patrol their exclusive economic zones.

There is a shared interest for both Fiji and the United States, as well as other partner nations, to protect fisheries as they provide a renewable source of food and income to the Pacific nations.

The Stratton crew also used small unmanned aircraft systems to increase the ship's capabilities and further extend the cutter's patrol area.

"Stratton's capacity for employing cutting-edge technology like sUAS, gives the Coast Guard the upper hand in the fight against IUU fishing," said Cmdr. Charter Tschirgi, Stratton's executive officer. "The vast area covered during patrols like these displays the reach the Coast Guard has and the length we will go to assist our partners in the Pacific."

While on patrol, Stratton's crew also participated in multiple joint exercises with partners in the region. These included a formation sailing with the HMS Spey, a tactical maneuvering drill with HMS Spey and USS Sampson, a joint patrol with an Australian Border Force patrol aircraft, fueling-at-sea with New Zealand's newest replenishment vessel HMNZS Aotearoa, and joint steaming with the French naval vessel FMS Arago and Fijian Patrol vessel Savenaca.