

# U.S. Coast Guard, CNMI partners strengthen maritime security presence in Saipan's waters



Members of the U.S. Coast Guard Sector Boarding Team conduct a joint patrol with the CNMI Department of Public Safety – Marine Unit personnel on March 20, 2026, in Saipan. From March 18-22, conducted joint underway and shoreside operations alongside the CNMI Department of Public Safety, Saipan Marine Unit, and Saipan Customs and Biosecurity, reinforcing direct lines of communication and cooperation that strengthen maritime domain awareness across the CNMI's waters and surrounding exclusive economic zone. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Chris Farrell)

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SAIPAN, CNMI – Federal and local maritime law enforcement agencies patrolled Saipan’s waters and port together in mid-March, boarding six small vessels and launching new coordination channels that expand the CNMI’s ability to monitor and respond to threats in its surrounding waters.

From March 18-22, the U.S. Coast Guard Sector Boarding Team conducted joint underway and shoreside operations alongside the CNMI Department of Public Safety Saipan Marine Unit and CNMI Customs and Biosecurity. Teams engaged 12 vessel contacts and completed six small vessel security boardings, while a joint patrol of the Port of Saipan marked the first combined shoreside operation between the U.S. Coast Guard and Customs and Biosecurity.

The operation also brought together key agency leaders for the first time. SBT members met with an ICE Homeland Security Investigations representative, the assistant director of the CNMI Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the newly appointed chief of the DPS’s Saipan Marine Unit – reinforcing direct lines of communication and cooperation that strengthen maritime domain awareness across the CNMI’s waters and surrounding exclusive economic zone.

“The Marianas sit at the center of Western Pacific maritime activity: commercial traffic, fishing, small vessels moving between islands,” said Lt. j.g. Thomas Forames-Su, supervisor of the SBT. “These operations are about more than boardings. We’re strengthening the relationships and shared awareness that let us and our partners act faster and more cohesively.”

Maritime domain awareness is a shared responsibility across federal, local, and community stakeholders. The CNMI’s economy depends heavily on the free flow of maritime commerce, fishing, and tourism, all of which require safe and well-monitored waters. Joint operations, like this one, strengthen the network of agencies and protect those interests every day.

Building on the momentum from this week's operations, the U.S. Coast Guard and CNMI partners are planning additional joint patrols, dockside security boardings, and coordinated cutter operations, like the USCGC Frederick Hatch's recent patrol, in the waters around Saipan and to the north. Agencies are also working to deepen communication protocols and formalize interagency coordination agreements to expand joint response capabilities across the region.