

U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Alert returns home after 61-day counternarcotics patrol in Eastern Pacific



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ASTORIA, Ore. – The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Alert (WMEC 630) and crew returned to homeport Friday, after a 61-day counternarcotics patrol in the Eastern Pacific.

On May 26, a U.S. Customs and Border Protection Marine Patrol Aircraft crew notified the Alert crew of a suspected “go-fast” vessel. The Alert crew launched the deployed Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron MH-65 Dolphin helicopter and aircrew along with the cutter’s small boat and law enforcement boarding team.

The Alert’s law enforcement boarding team interdicted the suspected go-fast vessel and suspected drug smugglers, discovering more than 2,600 kilograms of cocaine with an approximate value of \$75 million.

“I couldn’t be prouder of the Alert’s crew. They fought through significant adversity to complete an outstanding patrol, one that each crewmember can look back at and know that we fully embodied our motto, “*Semper Paratus*,” said Cmdr. Matthew Kolodica. “As I look back over my years in command,

this tour was both challenging and very rewarding, I will miss the Alert and crew as I transfer to the Coast Guard Academy. That said, I know with the arrival of Cmdr. Lee Crusius this summer that the cutter and crew will be in good hands well into the future.”

Kolodica will depart the Alert and be the director of Professional Maritime Studies at the Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut.

The fight against drug cartels in the Eastern Pacific Ocean requires unity of effort in all phases from detection, monitoring and interdictions, to criminal prosecutions by international partners and U.S. Attorneys in districts across the nation. The law enforcement phase of counter-smuggling operations in the Eastern Pacific Ocean is conducted under the authority of the 11th Coast Guard District, headquartered in Alameda, Calif. The interdictions, including the actual boardings, are led and conducted by members of the U.S. Coast Guard.

The Alert, commissioned in 1969, is a 210-foot Reliance-class medium endurance cutter stationed on the West Coast, and performs a variety of missions to protect Americans and American interests in the Northern and Eastern Pacific Ocean.