

USCGC Frederick Hatch concludes historic patrol with engagements in the Philippines, fisheries enforcement in Republic of Palau, Papua New Guinea



[Release from U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam](#)

SANTA RITA, Guam – The USCGC Frederick Hatch (WPC 1143) successfully concluded a routine 47-day expeditionary patrol covering more than 8,200 nautical miles under Operation Blue Pacific, returning to Guam on Thanksgiving, distinguished by a series of historic and strategic engagements across the Western Pacific and Oceania.

“USCGC Frederick Hatch’s highly successful patrol is a testament to the diligence and expertise of the crew onboard, always remaining positive and overcoming numerous challenges to continually set the standard for Coast Guard operations in the Pacific. Their efforts to keep our equipment functioning properly, go over the rail regularly for boardings, and cook meals in heavy seas is what makes the U.S. Coast Guard’s commitment to the Indo-Pacific region so strong. Our people are the best at what they do and always ready to go above and beyond when asked, which is the basis for being a trusted partner and fostering strong international alliances,” said Lt. Patrick Dreiss, commanding officer of the Frederick Hatch.

Historic First Visit to Tacloban, Philippines

A highlight of the patrol was Frederick Hatch's historic visit to Tacloban, Philippines, in mid-October, marking a significant milestone in U.S.-Philippines relations. The visit coincided with the 79th anniversary of the Battle of Leyte Gulf. In addition to the commemoration observance, the crew engaged in various activities, including a maritime law enforcement exchange supported by U.S. Coast Guard Maritime Security and Response Team West, community interactions, including a visit with the mayor, and cultural immersion.

Maritime Security and Fisheries Patrol

The second half of the patrol focused on countering illegal fishing and enhancing partnerships in the Republic of Palau and Papua New Guinea. While en route to Palau, the crew conducted critical observation reports highlighting potential threats to maritime governance and fishery management. These reports included observations of four Philippine-flagged fishing vessels at the boundary of Palau's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and the high seas, with one vessel within the Palauan EEZ when detected. Notably, these vessels needed permits to operate under the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) on the high seas or Palau EEZ, and their Philippine permits expired. Their presence and activities represent potential serious violations under the WCPFC regulations.

The following day, the crew reported two additional Philippine-flagged vessels fishing without permits in WCPFC-governed waters again near the Palau EEZ, adding to the count of serious violations. Following a port call in Palau on a subsequent patrol of the Palau EEZ, the crew identified only one vessel actively fishing, recently boarded, and detected no further unauthorized incursions. In response to a request from the Palau Joint Operations Center, the crew also disposed of two fish aggregating devices found within the Palau EEZ,

addressing concerns over illegal local fishing practices.

While en route to Papua New Guinea (PNG), Frederick Hatch's crew conducted one boarding on the high seas under WCPFC authority, reporting three potential violations. The crew then welcomed two PNG boarding officers, one from the Customs Services and one from the National Fisheries Authority, and together, they conducted nine additional PNG-led boardings within their EEZ under the bilateral maritime law enforcement agreement. These boardings undertaken in the eastern EEZ resulted in 16 issued violations and two warnings, addressing a range of issues such as exceeding crew occupancy limits based on available berthing, improper crew compositions due to a lack of required PNG crew expired seafarers' credentials, and poor vessel markings. The vessels' flags include the People's Republic of China, Vanuatu, and the Philippines.

"This proactive enforcement and monitoring underscore the importance of upholding good maritime governance and preserving sustainable fishing practices, critical for the ecological and economic health of the region," said Capt. Nick Simmons. "The relationships we're building in Oceania and the Western Pacific are crucial for our continued commitment to our allies. This patrol exemplifies our dedication to maintaining stability and security in these waters."

Engagement and Cooperation in Papua New Guinea

Frederick Hatch's visit to Papua New Guinea (PNG) exemplified increased bilateral defense and security cooperation, as highlighted by the recent signing and ratification of the Defense Cooperation Agreement. The crew's interactions with PNG fisheries, customs officers, and the local community underscore the ongoing effort to strengthen regional relationships.

"This patrol was our crew's first time working with PNG Customs and Fisheries, and we look forward to working with

them again in the future. Thank you to our two shipriders, Mr. Roger Sivlanduo and Mr. Jeremy Nelson, both skilled professionals and great people to have onboard to enrich the relationship between our agencies. It was an important opportunity to learn from each other and develop new tactics to address the IUU-F threat throughout Melanesia in the future while also carrying out several very successful boardings counteracting those threats in the present,” said Dreiss.

Support from DOL-X Team

The U.S. Coast Guard’s newly created DOL-X team was pivotal in supporting the Frederick Hatch’s logistics, including repairs and maintenance, ensuring the cutter’s operational readiness throughout the patrol. The team met the cutter during two port calls, hand-carrying critical parts to address casualties and augmenting the cutter’s engineers to repair the issues.

About the U.S. Coast Guard in the Pacific Region:

The U.S. Coast Guard is vital to ensuring maritime safety, security, and stewardship across a vast Pacific expanse, spanning six continents, 71 countries, and 74 million square miles of ocean. U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Area leads coordination and integration efforts in this vast region, promoting collaboration with partners through the actions of the U.S. Coast Guard 14th District and U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam teams.

The Frederick Hatch is the 43rd 154-foot Sentinel-class fast response cutter named for a surfman and lighthouse keeper who was a two-time Gold Life Saving Medal recipient. They regularly patrol Oceania, fostering international cooperation and supporting maritime safety, security, and stewardship.