

USCGC Hamilton Returns Home after Historic Sixth Fleet Deployment



The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Hamilton (WMSL 753) moors to the pier in North Charleston, South Carolina, Dec. 21. *U.S. COAST GUARD / Petty Officer 2nd Class Brandon Hillard*

NORTH CHARLESTON, S.C. – The crew of U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Hamilton (WMSL 753) returned to their homeport Dec. 21 in North Charleston following a 94-day deployment in the U.S. Naval Forces Europe – Africa area of operations, the Coast Guard Atlantic Area said in a release.

Hamilton's crew operated in support of the U.S. Sixth Fleet and was tasked to defend U.S., allied and partner interests.

Hamilton began its deployment with a transatlantic voyage to Rota, Spain and met with operational commanders from U.S. Sixth Fleet. After Spain, the cutter transited through the English Channel and Danish Straits, two vitally significant waterways that provide safe passage for 15% of the world's shipping.

Immediately upon entering the Baltic Sea region, Hamilton conducted at-sea exchanges with naval, coast guard and border guard forces of multiple Baltic Sea allies and partners, including Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Each engagement was oriented to support either traditional Coast Guard missions or in combination with defense readiness exercises used to enhance interoperability between the U.S. and NATO partners.

As the first U.S. military vessel to visit Turku, Finland in over a decade, Hamilton hosted public tours of the cutter and held a reception for U.S. and Finnish government and military

leaders. Guests included the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Finland, the deputy chief of the Finnish Border Guard, the state secretary of the Ministry of Interior and the mayor of Turku. The visit also served to reinforce the long-standing partnership between the Finnish Border Guard and the U.S. Coast Guard.

Additionally, Hamilton is the first U.S. Coast Guard cutter to visit Riga, Latvia in more than 20 years. The crew met with the U.S. ambassador to Latvia and hosted a reception on board Hamilton for members of Latvia's navy and coast guard to include the Latvian navy's chief of staff and the commander of the Latvian coast guard. Hamilton also served as a backdrop to Latvia's 104th Freedom Day celebration alongside NATO forces.

"It was an honor to grow the relationship between the United States and our Baltic Sea allies and partners during engagements both at sea and in port," said Capt. Matthew Brown, commanding officer of Hamilton. "By working side by side with our current and future NATO allies, we learned just how much we have in common, and we were left with a stronger appreciation for our shared values. I could not be more proud of this crew's hard work and sacrifice while serving as the United States' representatives in the Baltic."

Hamilton's deployment demonstrated the strategic value of conducting meaningful at-sea engagements, subject matter exchanges and port visits with allies and partners in the high northern latitudes and Baltic Sea region. The U.S. maritime services regularly operate with partner nations to cultivate a cohesive force to maintain freedom of the seas, ensure free economic exchange and maintain maritime security.

"The U.S. Coast Guard is a proud and capable partner of the U.S. Joint Forces serving in the Europe and Africa areas of operations," said Vice Adm. Kevin E. Lunday, commander of Coast Guard Atlantic Area. "We will continue to build maritime

domain awareness and share best practices with our partner nations' navies and coast guards."

Hamilton is a 418-foot, Legend-class national security cutter with a crew of 160. With its robust command, control, communication, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance equipment, the NSC is the most technologically advanced ship in the Coast Guard's fleet. NSCs are a worldwide deployable asset that supports the Department of Homeland Security, Department of Defense and national objectives to include drug interdiction, migrant interdiction, national defense, search and rescue, fisheries enforcement and national intelligence collection.