

USS Little Rock: Back with a Vengeance



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Caribbean Sea – The Freedom-variant littoral combat ship USS Little Rock (LCS 9) with an embarked U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) Law Enforcement Detachment (LEDET) has made its presence known in the fight against illicit drug-trafficking since entering the U.S. Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM) area of responsibility (AOR).

In early April, the team interdicted a go-fast vessel (GFV), detained four suspected drug smugglers, and recovered 50 kilograms of cocaine. Based on observations from the deployed helicopter, the suspected smugglers had jettisoned an estimated 650 kilograms of cocaine.

Later that month, while on patrol in the Caribbean, a maritime patrol aircraft spotted a suspected drug smuggling GFV and vectored Little Rock in for an intercept. In response, Little Rock deployed a helicopter and a sea asset. LEDET members saw a package get tossed into the water before the GFV stopped and the LEDET gained positive control of the vessel. After receiving permission to conduct a boarding, the LEDET detained three suspected drug smugglers and recovered an estimated 570 kilograms of suspected cocaine worth an approximate street value of more than \$14.25 million. This was just the beginning.

In early May, the Little Rock team interdicted another GFV,

detained two suspected drug smugglers, confiscated one firearm, and recovered an approximated 652 kilograms of cocaine. Later that month, the Little Rock had two more interdictions amounting to the detainment of six suspected drug smugglers and a recovery of an estimated 2,530 kilograms of cocaine overall.

“Little Rock is here to bring down the hammer on illicit trafficking in the Caribbean,” said Cmdr. Mike Chesnut, commanding officer of the USS Little Rock. “Together with JIATF-S (Joint Interagency Task Force – South) and our embarked team, we will pursue and disrupt Transnational Criminal Organizations to support stability at home and throughout the Americas.”

The USS Little Rock has had six GFV interdictions to date and Little Rock will continue to raise this number. As long as the ship is assigned to Commander, Task Force 45 (CTF-45), she will continue interdiction operations. CTF-45 is the 4th Fleet task force charged with executing combined naval operations, building and strengthening Latin American, south of Mexico, and Caribbean maritime partnerships, and acting as a DoD ready service provider to JIATF-S in support of counter illicit-drug trafficking operations in the Central and South American waters.

U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet supports USSOUTHCOM’s joint and combined military operations by employing maritime forces in cooperative maritime security operations to maintain access, enhance interoperability, and build enduring partnerships in order to enhance regional security and promote peace, stability and prosperity in the Caribbean, Central and South American region.

LEDETS are deployable specialized forces of the U.S. Coast Guard that enforce U.S. laws and treaties in the maritime domain. LEDETs conduct counter-smuggling operations as their primary mission from U.S. and allied platforms. The U.S. Coast

Guard is simultaneously a member of the Joint Force, a law enforcement organization, a regulatory agency, and a member of the intelligence community. The U.S. Coast Guard's wide suite of specialized maritime capabilities, competencies, and authorities enhances the Joint Force's comparative advantage at sea.