

USS Omaha Participates in Oceania Maritime Security Initiative



PACIFIC OCEAN – Sailors from USS Omaha (LCS 12), along with five U.S. Coast Guard law enforcement members, transit in a rigid-hull inflatable boat to a foreign flagged fishing vessel in support of the Oceania Maritime Security Initiative (OMSI) in the Pacific Ocean, Sept. 12. Omaha, assigned to U.S. 3rd Fleet, is operating in support of OMSI in the Indo-Pacific region. A U.S. Coast Guard law enforcement detachment from the Pacific Tactical Law Enforcement Team embarked aboard Omaha is supporting maritime fishery law enforcement operations for U.S. and Pacific Island nations in Oceania. OMSI is a Secretary of Defense program that leverages Department of Defense assets to increase U.S. Coast Guard maritime security and maritime domain awareness support in Oceania through operations in remote U.S. Exclusive Economic Zones and bilateral maritime law enforcement agreements with Pacific Island nations. (U.S. Navy photo by Hospital Corpsman First Class Weiju Lai)

By Commander, Littoral Combat Ship Squadron 1, Sept. 20, 2024

PACIFIC OCEAN – The Independence-variant littoral combat ship USS Omaha (LCS 12), with an embarked detachment from Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron (HSM) 35 and a law enforcement detachment from U.S. Coast Guard Tactical Law Enforcement Team Pacific, began operations in support of Oceania Maritime Security Initiative (OMSI) Sept. 8.

A Secretary of Defense program, OMSI is aimed at diminishing transnational illegal activity on the high seas in the Pacific Island nations of Oceania's Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ), as well as increasing interoperability with partner nations.

Omaha's range and capabilities allow the embarked U.S. Coast

Guard law enforcement detachment the ability to access the remote U.S. and Pacific Island nations' EEZs.

"We embrace the opportunity to work closely with the U.S. Coast Guard as we help enforce economic policies among some of our closest partners in the Western and Central Pacific," said U.S. Navy Cmdr. Kevin Smith, commanding officer of Omaha. "It is rewarding to work with these island nations to patrol their waters, maintaining a free and open region."

The objective of OMSI is to reduce and eliminate illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing, combat transnational crimes in EEZs of the Western and Central Pacific region and enhance regional security.

"The partnership between the U.S. Navy and U.S. Coast Guard plays an integral role in the OMSI mission," said Coast Guard Chief Maritime Enforcement Specialist Kyle Smouse. "Deploying U.S. Coast Guard law enforcement detachments aboard U.S. Navy vessels allows the Coast Guard to have a greater presence and impact in enforcing Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) regulations. These areas of operation would be difficult to reach without the support of the U.S. Navy."

The WCPFC international fisheries agreement focuses on the long-term conservation and sustainable use of fish stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean. The WCPFC seeks to address problems in the management of the high seas fisheries in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean, where there is unregulated fishing and vessel re-flagging to evade controls.

Omaha, homeported in San Diego and assigned to U.S. 3rd Fleet, is on a scheduled deployment in the Pacific Ocean. Littoral combat ships are fast, optimally manned, mission-tailored surface combatants that operate in near-shore and open-ocean environments, winning against 21st-century coastal threats.