

Coast Guard Bringing in Drugs by the Boat Load

Story by PA1 Donnie Brzuska, PADET Jacksonville, Fla.

NAVAL STATION MAYPORT, Fla. -- Coast Guard crews have been bringing illegal narcotics here from seizures from all over the world by boat loads – literally.

Coast Guard crews from two separate cutters and a law enforcement detachment from Tactical Law Enforcement Team South from Miami conducted three separate offloads at Naval Station Mayport in less than a two-week period offloading more than 41,000 pounds of illegal narcotics.

These offloads come on the heels of the recent announcement by officials at Coast Guard Headquarters in Washington that America's premier maritime law enforcement agency set a cocaine interdiction record for the first quarter of a fiscal year, removing 97,635 pounds of the drug between Oct. 1, 2006, and Jan.1, 2007, eclipsing the previous high of 76,925 pounds, set during the first quarter of fiscal 2006.



JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (Mar. 27, 2007)--Petty Officer 1st Class Nghiep Trang of Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron in Jacksonville aims his sights in the path of a Coast Guard tactical training boat while preparing for an upcoming deployment. Coast Guard photograph by PA1 Donnie Brzuska, PADET Jacksonville.

"The U.S. Coast Guard is committed to protecting our citizens from all threats in the maritime environment," said Rear Adm. Wayne Justice, the Coast Guard's assistant commandant for response. "These numbers indicate that we are still on the beat stopping the flow of illegal narcotics into this country."

The drugs that were offloaded were seized during six separate busts in the Eastern Pacific Ocean and Caribbean Sea.

The first offload came March 29 from the Coast Guard Cutter Dallas from Charleston, S.C., which pulled into Mayport with more than 9,000 pounds of cocaine from three separate busts in the Eastern Pacific and the Caribbean

Sea.

Dallas seized 450 pounds of the drugs when they thwarted an attempt by smugglers to drop five bales of cocaine from an airplane to a small-smuggling vessel March 21 in the Caribbean Sea.



Dallas was carrying two other busts for the Coast Guard Cutter Morgenthau from Alameda, Calif., that disrupted two smuggling attempts in the Eastern Pacific Ocean with the help of the Coast Guard Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron from Jacksonville, Fla., which

MAYPORT, Fla. - More than 30,000 pounds of pure cocaine sit on the pier next to the USS McInerney (FFG-8) just after it was offloaded. Coast Guard photograph by PA2 Bobby Nash, PADET Jacksonville.

resulted in the seizure of more than 9,000 pounds of cocaine and the detention of nine suspected drug smugglers.



JACKSONVILLE, Fla. -- Seaman Thomas Chegin of the Coast Guard Cutter *Dallas* from Charleston, S.C., ensures security for his shipmates while they offload more than 9,000 pounds of cocaine at Naval Station Mayport, Fla. Coast Guard photograph by PA1 Donnie Brzuska, PADET Jacksonville.

The second offload April 5 came in on the U.S. Navy's USS *McInerney* (FFG-8) after it was seized in two separate busts in the Eastern Pacific Ocean Feb. 4 and March 1 keeping approximately \$400 million off U.S. streets.

The first bust that occurred on Feb. 4 was made by crews from the Coast Guard Cutter *Hamilton* from Alameda, Calif., and *HITRON*. *HITRON* crews spotted a fleeing go-fast in the Eastern Pacific Ocean, and the *HITRON*-precision gunner shot out the engines of the fleeing go-fast. A boarding team from *Hamilton* seized 41 bales of cocaine from the boat and detained five suspected smugglers.

The second bust offloaded from the *McInerney* was seized by a Coast Guard LEDET from TACLET South aboard the *McInerney* during a boarding on the merchant vessel *Ocean Song*. The Coast Guard law enforcement team found 457 bales of cocaine in the ship's cargo hold and took nine suspected smugglers into custody.

The Coast Guard Cutter *Northland* from Portsmouth, Va., dropped off 2,000 pound bust consisting of 55 bales of cocaine and four bales of heroin April 9. Crews from the *Northland* and *HITRON* seized the drugs March 10 when the *HITRON* aircrew spotted a go-fast while on patrol in the waters of Guajira Peninsula, Colombia.

MAYPORT, Fla. - Petty Officer 2nd Class (BM2) Nathan Thomas of Law Enforcement Detachment 409 of Tactical Law Enforcement Team South in Miami lifts a 70-pound bale of pure cocaine to offload it from the USS *McInerney* (FFG-8) in Mayport April 5. "This has been a highly successful counter narco-terrorism patrol for the ship, crew and nation; I am really proud of this crew (from the *Northland*) and *HITRON*," said Cmdr. Christopher Austin, commanding officer of *Northland*.



MAYPORT, Fla. - Petty Officer 2nd Class Nathan Thomas of Law Enforcement Detachment 409 of Tactical Law Enforcement Team South in Miami lifts a 70-pound bale of pure cocaine to offload it from the USS *McInerney* (FFG-8) in Mayport April 5. Coast Guard photograph by PA2 Bobby Nash, PADET Jacksonville.

The vessel began to flee from the helicopter crew and ignored orders by the aircrew to stop. The aircrew brought the vessel to a halt after the precision gunner disabled the engines with his .50-caliber sniper rifle.

A boarding team from the *Northland* arrived at the go-fast's position to take the five suspected smugglers into custody and

retrieved the contraband.

"The HITRON-cutter package is an outstanding tool in the war on drugs, our success this deployment has kept close to 2,000 kilos of cocaine and heroin off the streets," said Austin.

The drugs were brought to Naval Station Mayport because the U.S. Attorney's Office Middle District Florida in Tampa prosecutes all maritime drug smuggling cases in the United States. Naval Station Mayport offers a secure and centralized location for cutters and U.S. Navy ships returning from counter narcotics patrols to offload contraband.

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