

## **Coast Guard Cutter Alert to return from successful deployment**

### **Local News**

Posted by: David Haviland

Posted on : December 6, 2010 at 5:05 am

ASTORIA, Ore. — The Coast Guard Cutter Alert will return to its homeport of Astoria, Monday, after a successful deployment involving the capture of eight suspected drug smugglers and their cargoes of cocaine. The crew of the Alert and an embarked Coast Guard MH-65 Dolphin helicopter stopped two suspected drug smuggling vessels during a patrol in the Eastern Pacific Ocean off the coast of Central America this month. Approximately half a ton of cocaine was recovered and eight suspected smugglers were turned over to partner-nation law enforcement authorities in the region. On Nov. 06 the crew of a Coast Guard HC-130 Hercules aircraft crew patrolling in the area spotted a suspicious boat in international waters approximately 225 miles off the coast of El Salvador.

The Sacramento, Calif., based aircrew observed bales being tossed overboard by the suspected smugglers. The C-130's surveillance information was relayed and the Alert launched its helicopter and an interceptor boat with a tactical pursuit team to stop and board the suspect vessel. When the suspect boat was stopped three suspects were taken into custody and later turned over to Ecuadorian authorities. A second boat crew from the Alert recovered one of the jettisoned bales which tested positive for cocaine. On Nov. 21 the crew of a Navy aircraft on a routine patrol of the area observed a fast-moving vessel laden with suspicious cargo in international waters off the coast of Colombia. Based on the Navy's information the crew of the Alert launched its helicopter and an interceptor boat with a tactical pursuit team. The helicopter crew witnessed the suspects aboard the vessel jettisoning multiple bales while attempting to avoid pursuit. The helicopter marksman used engine-disabling gunfire to stop the fleeing vessel. Meanwhile, the cutter's tactical pursuit boat team recovered 20 jettisoned bales and then boarded the disabled vessel. The recovered bales tested positive for cocaine and five suspected drug traffickers were taken into custody and later turned over to Colombian authorities. "I commend the crew of the cutter Alert, the helicopter interceptor squadron, the U.S. Navy and our international partners for their diligence and excellent coordination in these interdictions," said Rear Adm. Joseph P. Castillo, Coast Guard 11th district commander. "Because of their efforts, tons of illegal drugs were stopped and eight suspected smugglers have been turned over to our partner nations to face justice," he said. The Alert is a 210-foot cutter home ported in Astoria, Ore. The vessel supports law enforcement, counter-illicit activity, living marine resource protection, fisheries enforcement, search and rescue, homeland security and marine safety missions worldwide. The Alert's MH-65 Dolphin helicopter crew is based out of the Coast Guard's Jacksonville, Fla., helicopter interdiction tactical squadron, known as HITRON. These helicopters support counter-narcotics and homeland security operations by intercepting suspected targets, interdicting vessels and vectoring interdiction assets to the location of suspected vessels and contraband.

For additional details on USCGC Alert please visit:

[www.uscg.mil/pacarea/cgcalert](http://www.uscg.mil/pacarea/cgcalert) For additional details on HITRON please visit:

[www.uscg.mil/lantarea/hitron](http://www.uscg.mil/lantarea/hitron)