

The Coke Stops Here

Story by PA2 Bobby Nash, PADET Jacksonville, Fla.

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. -- Florida has been the last stop for more than 22 tons of cocaine seized recently. Drug busts from the Caribbean and Pacific reach Florida in heavy bales of nearly pure cocaine. Here are some of the latest offloads that have taken place in the district.



Crewmembers of the Coast Guard Cutter *Bear*, home ported in Portsmouth Va., pose for next to 1,800 pounds of seized drugs in the Caribbean Sea. Coast Guard photograph courtesy of the *Bear*.

The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter *Bear*, home ported in Portsmouth, Va., offloaded more than 1,800 pounds of cocaine in Key West, Fla., Jan. 23 after the drugs were seized in the Caribbean Sea Dec. 2006.

The crew of the *Bear* detected a vessel on radar Dec. 19, 2006 and flew a deployed MH-68 Sting Ray helicopter from Jacksonville, to identify the large fishing vessel. With permission of the flag state, coordinated by the Coast Guard's Seventh District Command Center, a boarding team from the *Bear* conducted an extensive 16-hour boarding.

Boarding team members discovered the contraband hidden below concrete in the fish hold. With the flag state's authorization, the boarding team seized the drugs, detained the crew and vessel.

Coast Guard, other military and law enforcement officials offloaded 43,420 pounds of cocaine from USS *Robert G. Bradley* (FFG 49) Jan. 12 at Naval Station Mayport, Fla., from several Coast Guard and Navy drug seizures in the Pacific Ocean.

The offloaded drugs are from seven interdictions made in September, October, November and December 2006. Members of Coast Guard Helicopter Tactical Interdiction Squadron Jacksonville were critical players in the seizure of 8,850-pounds of the cocaine that is scheduled to be offloaded.

The crew of HITRON Jacksonville serves at



Tactical Law Enforcement South members stand watch over more than 43,000 pounds of cocaine in Mayport, Fla. The cocaine was offloaded from the USS *Robert G. Bradley* and was the culmination of several busts made in the Caribbean Sea. Coast Guard photograph by PA1 Donnie Brzuska, PADET Jacksonville, Fla.

Cecil Field in Jacksonville and flies training missions over the St. Johns River and off the coast of Jacksonville's beaches daily.

The seizures are listed in chronological order as follows.

- Crewmembers from the 378-foot Coast Guard Cutter *Boutwell* from Alameda, Calif., and HITRON interdicted a "go-fast" vessel approximately 120-miles west of Puerto Quetzal and seized 7,000-pounds of cocaine and detained four suspected smugglers Sept. 12, 2006.
- Crewmembers from the *Boutwell* and HITRON interdicted another "go-fast" vessel approximately 460-miles northeast of the Galapagos Islands and seized 1,250 pounds of cocaine and three suspected smugglers Sept. 17, 2006.
- Crewmembers from the Coast Guard Cutter *Zephyr* from Coronado, Calif., interdicted a Guatemalan fishing vessel 100-miles south of Guatemala and seized approximately 20-pounds of cocaine Oct. 2, 2006.
- Crewmembers from the *Zephyr* interdicted another Guatemalan fishing vessel approximately 118-miles south of Nicaragua and seized 3,500 pounds of cocaine and detained four suspected smugglers Oct. 13, 2006.
- Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment 105 boarding team members from San Diego and the USS *Thach* (FFG-43) also from San Diego interdicted a Costa Rican fishing vessel approximately 100-miles south of Cabo Matapalo, Costa Rica and seized 19,500-pounds of cocaine and detained six suspected smugglers Oct. 20, 2006.
- Coast Guard LEDET 105, a Navy HH-60 helicopter with a Coast Guard HITRON gunner aboard and the USS *Thach* interdicted a "go-fast" approximately 245-miles northeast of the Galapagos Islands and seized 1,100-pounds of cocaine and detained four suspected smugglers Nov. 6, 2006.
- Crewmembers of the Coast Guard Cutter *Steadfast*, from Astoria, Ore., interdicted a semi-submersible vessel approximately 90-miles southwest of Costa Rica and seized 7,000-pounds of cocaine and detained four suspected smugglers Nov. 16, 2006
- Crewmembers from the 378-foot Coast Guard Cutter *Morgenthau* from Alameda recovered 4,600-pounds of cocaine jettisoned from a "go-fast" vessel 250-miles south of El Salvador Dec. 14, 2006.

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