



16214
May 13, 2020

Mr. William Ailā Jr., Chair
Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve
Daniel K. Inouye Pacific Regional Center
1845 Wasp Blvd., Bldg. 176
Honolulu, HI 96818

Dear Mr. Ailā:

I am pleased to report to the Council the following summary of U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) fisheries law enforcement activities in the Western and Central Pacific region for the period of December 2019 through May 2020.

USCG Operation KOHOLĀ GUARDIAN commenced on 01 January and continued to 31 March in support of the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary. District 14 (D14), NOAA Office of Law Enforcement (OLE), and Hawaii Department of Conservation and Resource Enforcement (DOCARE) partnered to create a multi-agency monitoring and enforcement program for humpback whale season. Sector Honolulu and Air Station Barbers Point dedicated patrols to deter harassment and illegal approach activities, as well as, educate mariners on regulations. This pulse operation has run continuously since 2008.



Enforcement Officer Thomas "Ted" Kearns, NOAA, passes out a flyer to a recreational boater off the coast of Maui, Hawaii, Feb. 15, 2020. The USCG and NOAA work to protect whales and other marine species in the Hawaiian waters through community engagement, education, and local outreach programs. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Benjamin Berkow/Released)

Additionally, USCG supported NOAA in responding to distressed marine mammals. Several training sessions were conducted in January and February to prepare USCG crews to respond to large whale entanglements including a classroom instruction and an on-water joint training between Station Honolulu and NOAA personnel. Both training sessions were valuable and provided hands-on experience for potential responders. In February, Air Station Barbers Point HC-130 Hercules aircrew provided NOAA assistance in transporting a Hawaiian Monk Seal from Oahu to Kona to support conservation and recovery efforts of this species.



Personnel from USCG D14, NOAA, and The Marine Mammal Center partnered to transport a rehabilitated monk seal from Oahu to Kona aboard an HC-130 Hercules airplane February 19, 2020. The adult female seal, Pōhaku, was taken to the Marine Mammal Center's Ke Kai Ola monk seal rehabilitation facility on Hawaii Island for the long-term care she needs. (U.S. Coast Guard courtesy photo/Released)

USCG conducted an LE surge operation on Hawaii Island from February to March to increase presence in the area, conduct Ports, Waterways, and Coastal Security, support KOHOLĀ GUARDIAN efforts, and conduct joint operations with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

In March, D14 participated in Pacific Island Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) surveillance operation, OP RAI BALANG, designed to combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) in the Pacific. Eight Pacific island countries, the U.S., Australia, New Zealand, and France participated, including CG Air Station Barbers Point HC-130 Hercules aircrew and the crew of USCGC SEQUOIA (WLB

215). During the two-week effort, FFA coordinated air and surveillance assets over 5 million square miles resulting in 108 sightings and 24 boardings both at sea and in port.



A boarding team from the USCGC Sequoia (WLB 215) approaches a Taiwanese fishing vessel in the Pacific Ocean, March 13, 2020. The crew undertook a fisheries patrol as part of joint efforts for Operation Rai Balang under the Forum Fisheries Agency. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by USCGC Sequoia/Released)

USCGC MIDGETT (WMSL 757) completed a 37-day patrol to counter IUU fishing and support regional security in Oceania, signifying the cutter's first patrol. USCGC MIDGETT's crew protected fisheries by patrolling U.S. EEZ surrounding Johnston Atoll, Kingman Reef, and Palmyra Atoll, and provided U.S. presence to assure U.S. sovereignty and resource security in these remote regions. Additionally, USCGC MIDGETT patrolled the high seas and boarded foreign-flagged fishing vessels in support of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) High Seas Boarding and Inspection (HSBI) program.



The Landing Signal Officer on the USCGC Midgett (WMSL 757) gives direction to an Air Station Barbers Point MH-65 Dolphin helicopter crew while operating in the Pacific Ocean on April 10, 2020. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by USCGC Midgett/Released)

USCG D14 continued maritime domain awareness (MDA) efforts including identification of a foreign fishing vessel suspected to be engaged in fishing in U.S. EEZ northwest of main Hawaiian Islands and west of Midway Island in January. After identification, D14 launched Air Station Barbers Point HC-130 Hercules with a NOAA OLE agent to gather evidence. When queried, the foreign flagged fishing vessel confirmed actively fishing in its current position, inside the U.S. EEZ. The incursion was documented by Air Station Barbers Point HC-130 Hercules aircrew and the NOAA OLE agent.

District Fourteen enforcement staff participated in living marine resources enforcement related meetings this reporting period including the NOAA Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument LE working group meeting and the January NOAA Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve Advisory Council (RAC) meeting. The D14 Commander hosted a visit with NOAA Director of Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS), ONMS Acting Pacific Island Regional Director, and ONMS Superintendent of Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument in January. Joint efforts and methods to enhance collaboration were discussed. In March, the D14 Commander hosted a teleconference with the Superintendent and Supervisor for the Pacific Islands Refuges and Monuments Office for the USFWS and USFWS Superintendent Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument to discuss future coordination opportunities.

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The COVID-19 Pandemic has impacted living marine resources and law enforcement operations. Strategies to ensure the health and safety of our workforce while executing critical missions and serving the public continue to develop. USCG continues efforts to protect resources during these challenging times.

Sincerely

C.M. Norman
U.S. Coast Guard
Fourteenth Coast Guard District