

Greetings Hamilton Families and Friends~

I hope this letter meets you in the same good cheer and spirits as the crew and I send it to you. Let me give you an inside look into underway Hamilton life. We had our first cocaine bust during our third week out at sea. We spotted a go-fast vessel and our helicopter took the necessary actions to stop the boat with disabling fire. The smugglers knew that they were caught so they poured diesel all over their boat and caught it on fire. When the cutter arrived on scene we had to use our firefighting skills to put out the fire in order to recover over 900lbs of cocaine (worth \$50 million). Our ten detainees, which the small boat rescued from the water, remained on board as our special narcotic-terrorist “guests” for days until we turned them over to the proper authorities. We are glad to get rid of them as they were starting to smell the helicopter hanger a bit.



Above: small boat crew ENS Kaltsas, ENS Cruzcosa, BM1 Foreman, BM3 Ramirez and FN Swazey transferring a sample of the contraband. Photo ENS Love

Our first drug seizure of the patrol came inadvertently and without intelligence to support it. We were breaking in the brand new small boat (shown above) and putting hours on the engine to see what it could do and there it was, a 3.3 kilo brick of marijuana floating in the water. This was less than a week into the patrol and we saw this as good luck and the first of multiple busts. We all received anti-marijuana pins for our Hamilton hats which add a little bit of flair to the constant navy blue uniform that we wear daily.



Above: our helicopter preparing to land on the flight deck. Photo ENS Love

The morale of the ship is high right now. We have had many events including Ham Bones which is a dominoes tournament, Bingo every Sunday night where you win pounds of Cheez-its and beef jerky, Heard-It which is the Scene-It version of name-that-

tune (the jury is still out about what team won) and the morale event of all morale events is the Ham-Bone “out of regulations” mustache growing contest. For some of our more experienced crew members, the five o’clock shadow is now a blessing, for others, however this is their first attempt and practically had to will each hair out individually. The winners are below in their respective category for the three week long contest.

Beastly: ENS Velasco Pretty & stylish: FN Hernandez Nice Try: FS2 Manuel



Photos ET2 Orgeta

Our Independence Day started off with CCR’s “Fortunate Son” over the PA loudspeaker as reveille. It was also the day we pulled into Manzanillo, Mexico for an unanticipated port call. We were supposed to stop for gas and continue southbound immediately but plans changed and we had an actual port call. The ship threw a party which was a huge success, as we took over a hotel on the beach. With so many new crew members, the opportunity for people to mingle away from the boat is essential for teamwork and building friendships on and off the ship. The only thing lacking was fireworks which we could not set off in Manzanillo probably because it is the biggest shipping port in Western Mexico.

In Manta, the ship organized a community service event where ** of our crew painted a nursing home making it look as good as new! The citizens thanked us profusely. This kind of event shows that Coasties go from chasing to narco-terrorists one moment to valued members of the community the next, sacrificing their time to help others less fortunate than us.

There are some people onboard who have never crossed the equator so we will have a little ceremony after we pull out of Manta, Ecuador. The Pollywogs, who have not crossed the line before, then become shellbacks after an elaborate ceremony with a final acceptance into the Royal Court of the Ocean. Each shellback receives a certificate showing that they are true sailors. Now all of Hamilton’s sailors will be shellbacks!



Above: the sun setting behind our ship in the North Pacific Ocean. Photo ENS Love

When we depart San Diego Harbor sea lions like to wish us bon voyage as they sun themselves on the buoys and fuel pier. They will be greeting us when we return in two and half months but their greeting will be nothing compared to seeing all of your smiling faces.