



**(S//SI//REL) Touchdown for SIGINT In East Pacific Drug Bust**

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*(C) SIGINT is the sole source of intelligence to make the operation possible.*

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(C) SIGINT played a decisive role this month in the seizure by authorities of 2.7 metric tons of cocaine from a Mexican-flagged smuggling vessel in the Eastern Pacific, and the disruption of an additional load being delivered to the vessel. With these events, the year's total for drug seizures in the Joint Interagency Task Force South (JIATF-S) theater surpassed the 250 metric ton mark, exceeding the record set in 2005. Of even greater significance, this success was made possible exclusively by SIGINT, namely the unique reporting provided by NSA's International Crime & Narcotics (ICN, S2F) organization and the coordination efforts of [Cryptologic Services Group Key West](#) (CSGKW). Normally, successful seizures are the result of multi-source intelligence fusion, with law-enforcement HUMINT providing the lead information.

(TS//SI//REL) The story began on December 5th with an initial JIATF-S tip that a P-3 maritime patrol aircraft had reported a surface target of interest (STOI) heading south in the northeastern Pacific. CSGKW's analyst searched the area for suspect IRIDIUM\* phone numbers, which led to identification of a potential target. CSGKW requested ICN task the number for collection and assess whether the activity was indicative of legitimate fishing operations or suspect of narcotics trafficking.



*(U) Perry-class frigate [Jane's] and a P-3 aircraft (shown flying near Mount Fuji)*

(TS//SI//REL) On December 6th, the ICN Maritime Team Lead and Senior Language Analyst discerned that the activity was definitely suspect, and that all indicators pointed to an imminent at-sea rendezvous and transfer of narcotics between two vessels. Continued monitoring provided the transfer time and place, and that two HF frequencies and the HF callsign "EL CUERVO" would be used for coordination of yet another rendezvous. CSGKW tipped the HF frequencies to the JIATF-S Tactical Support Group, who subsequently alerted the other members of the [SANDKEY](#) \*\* community. With confidence in the information at hand, CSGKW advised the JIATF-S Joint Interagency Intelligence Operations Center (JIIOC) that the Mexican-flagged fishing vessel *Ady Alondra* was definitely our candidate for an on-load of cocaine.

(TS//SI//REL) Based on our assessment, the JIIOC leadership decided to "gas & go" the Perry-class frigate *USS Thach*, expedite port call for fuel, and make best speed towards the *Ady Alondra*'s last known position. Through the late evening hours and into the next morning, analysts from ICN and CSGKW worked extended hours to monitor this activity and ensure JIATF-S had the latest intelligence and geo-location information, which proved fruitful. ICN analysts continued to provide email tippers and serialized reports detailing the successful transfer of 105 bales. The geo-location information proved effective in vectoring *Thach* to the vicinity of the fishing boat.

(TS//SI//REL) In the early morning hours of the 7th, *Thach* arrived on scene, launched its helicopter at first light, and eventually located the *Ady Alondra*. The actual boarding did not occur until the 8th of December, after the decision was reached to conduct a joint interdiction operation. The Mexican Navy vessel *Sonora* arrived on scene and authorized the US Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment (LEDET) on board *USS Thach* to begin the search. Within hours, the LEDET secured the vessel and its crew, and then discovered a suspicious hatch with missing bolts in which they found the 107 bales of cocaine.

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(C) As exciting as this event was, the activity did not stop there. SANDKEY intercept collected from the tipped frequencies revealed that a "go-fast" boat using the HF callsign "CUERVO" was en route to the vicinity of *Ady Alondra*'s intended destination, some 40 miles away from the point of interdiction. This rendezvous was foiled when the "go-fast" was detected by a US Customs Border Protection P-3 aircraft. Since there were no surface assets available in the immediate area, JIATF-S directed the P-3 to spook the "go-fast" with a few low-level overflights, which influenced the "go-fast" captain to dump his bales into the water. A drug seizure and a disruption -- not a bad day's work for us SIGINTers and the JIATF-S team!

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(U) Notes:

\*(U) IRIDIUM is a communications satellite network.

\*\* (C//REL) SANDKEY is plaintext, single channel, non-governmental radio communications of illicit international trafficking activities that have no reasonable expectation of privacy.

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