

CITY OF SANTA BARBARA WATERFRONT DEPARTMENT

MEMORANDUM

Date: January 24, 2012
To: Harbor Commissioners
From: Scott Riedman, Waterfront Director
Subject: Harbor Operations Report

Coast Guardsman Killed During At-Sea Drug Interdiction

A 34-year-old Coast Guardsman was killed after his small boat was struck by an alleged drug smuggling panga shortly after 1 a.m. on December 2nd. The Coast Guard cutter *Halibut* had responded to a report from patrol aircraft of a panga type-vessel suspected of illegal activities near Santa Cruz Island. The cutter deployed a small boat that approached the panga, allegedly operated by Mexican Nationals carrying marijuana. The panga reportedly sped toward the small boat and struck it before fleeing the scene.

Two Coast Guardsmen were thrown into the water. They were immediately recovered and transported to Port Hueneme. One was pronounced dead from a traumatic head injury. The other sustained minor injuries. Additional Coast Guard crews eventually stopped the fleeing panga 20 miles north of the Mexican border, detaining two suspects.

This incident serves as a reminder that drug-smuggling pangas frequenting the Santa Barbara Channel and Santa Barbara Channel Islands are involved a dangerous, illegal, high-stakes enterprise. If boaters see what they believe is a panga engaged in illegal operations, they should call 9-1-1 to report a description of the vessel, plus its direction and speed of travel. Under no circumstances should boaters approach pangas at sea. Signs of illegal activity include:

- Heavily laden, ill-equipped vessels without running lights;
- Boats operating at odd hours or in odd locations;
- Suspicious coastal activity such as people signaling to boats, or people watching maritime activity when no special events are present; and
- Suspicious vehicles in coastal neighborhoods at odd hours

Alleged Abalone Poachers Nabbed

In the first bust of commercial fishermen for poaching abalone since the abs were put "off limits" in Southern California 15 years ago, four men were nabbed with a total of four abalone on a sea urchin dive boat in Santa Barbara Harbor on November 21st. Three of the men arrested were licensed urchin divers. The fourth, from New York, was not a licensed fisherman.

California Fish and Game wardens discovered the large, live abalone (one measured over 10" across) stuffed in a wetsuit aboard the boat. It was unclear whether the alleged poachers planned to eat the abs or sell them on the black market, where they

could fetch up to \$150 a piece. (Despite the wardens' efforts to return the abs to the ocean, they died and are now in an evidence freezer.)

Parade of Lights Recap

Clear skies and glassy seas made for an outstanding 27th annual Parade of Lights on December 9th, during which 25 boats (including five human-powered craft) decorated to the theme of "Starry, Starry Night." A fireworks display capped the parade, and then 100+ people packed the Maritime Museum for an awards party catered by the Endless Summer bar-café. Thousands of dollars of prizes were awarded—many from Waterfront businesses—including a grand prize that went to Brie Billups and Shawn Hughes aboard the sail vessel *Scrub a Dub*. Staff wishes to thank all the participants and remind boaters that it's not too early to begin thinking about this year's Parade of Lights, scheduled for December 8th. Theme: "*A Rockin' and Rollin' Holiday.*"

Prepared By: Mick Kronman, Harbor Operations Manager