

## **PRESS BRIEF**

### **Indian Coast Guard - US Coast Guard Strengthen Ties Through Visit of USCG Cutter Bertholf to Port Blair (07-10 Mar 24)**

New Delhi, 09 Mar 24: The United States Coast Guard Cutter Bertholf departed from Port Blair, India, on 09 Mar 24, after a successful visit strengthening the partnership between the USCG and Indian Coast Guard (ICG). The four-day visit is aimed to enhance maritime cooperation and interoperability between the two forces.

The visit was marked by a series of engaging harbour activities and sea exercise designed to foster collaboration. The activities included cross-visits, where crew members from both the Bertholf and ICG had the opportunity to tour each other's ships, gaining valuable insights into their capabilities and procedures. A friendly badminton competition was also organised, which provided a lighthearted opportunity for crews to interact and build camaraderie outside a professional setting.

The centerpiece of the visit is a comprehensive sea exercise codenamed "Sea Defenders-2024." This exercise is focused on critical maritime security issues and included a variety of scenarios including Pollution Response Demonstration, in which Indian Coast Guard ships and aircraft showcased their expertise in responding to oil spills and other environmental hazards at sea. The exercise also simulated Visit Board Search and Seizure (VBSS) Operations for inspecting vessels suspected of illegal activity.

During the exercise Indian Coast Guard helicopter and Dornier aircraft conducted Search & Rescue and Pollution Response demonstrations, showcasing ICG ability in undertaking aerial surveillance and rescue missions. The exercise also included practice to neutralize asymmetric threats, akin to drone attacks on commercial merchant traffic. The exercise also provided a platform for both USCG and ICG personnel to hone their firefighting and damage control skills through a simulated scenario, where DCFF teams showcased capabilities to combat shipboard emergencies.

These joint exercises provide valuable training opportunities for both Coast Guards, allowing them to refine their skills and improve their ability to work together in a coordinated manner. The visit of the USCGC Bertholf to Port Blair serves as a powerful symbol of the growing partnership between the US and Indian Coast Guard. Through collaborative efforts, both nations are working towards a safer and secure maritime environment.

