



CUSTOMS & QUARANTINE AGENCY, GUAM

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Director's Office

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Guam Customs Officers Complete NOAA's International Seafood Trade, SIMP Container Inspection Training

BARRIGADA, Guam – Guam Customs officers completed the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) International Seafood Trade and Seafood Import Monitoring Program (SIMP) Container Inspection Training administered Aug. 4-8 at the CQA headquarters.

The training, attended by officers with CQA's Maritime Interdiction Task Force (MITF), Agriculture Canine Unit, and Airport and Maritime sections, focused on combating illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing to ensure that seafood harvested illicitly are not supplying the United States seafood industry.

With instruction about the International Fisheries Trade Permit, chain of custody, and record keeping, officers participated in table-top exercises to review the chain of custody material and on-site inspections of both importers and cargo to enhance document review processes and physical inspections.

"Illegal fishing threatens the sustainability of fishery stocks worldwide, especially highly migratory species in the global commons of the high seas. Fishing is also critical to the island nations as a source of economy and food supply," said Murray Bauer, acting deputy special agent in charge of the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement Pacific Islands Division. "Our efforts are to make sure fish imported anywhere under U.S. jurisdiction are harvested lawfully, and not through forced labor."

CQA is a part of NOAA's Cooperative Enforcement Program with deputized officers trained to support enforcement of federal import regulations as they relate to living marine resource conservation, protection of endangered species, and critical habitat enforcement.

Martina Sagapolu, assistant director for NOAA's Office of Law Enforcement, Pacific Islands Division, emphasized the critical importance of collaborative efforts with territorial partners, like the MITF, in the fight against IUU Fishing and the rising issue of seafood fraud.

Sagapolu noted that partnerships with territorial agencies like MITF act as "force multipliers". By working together, we strengthen the ability to address the complex challenges posed by IUU fishing and seafood fraud. Specifically, the MITF is involved in physically inspecting containers of seafood to verify products and ensure proper labeling. This hands-on approach helps to detect mislabeled seafood products, a key aspect of seafood fraud.

For MITF Officer Christopher Espinosa, the training expounded on regulatory laws, such as the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, the Lacey Act, and the Endangered Species Act.

“NOAA was able to clarify key points within these specific regulations to allow for a better understanding on how to enforce requirements effectively. The training also emphasized and placed into perspective the reason for such stringent and meticulous documentation requirements with regard to the importation of specific species of seafood, and how customs officers play a crucial role in the regulation and preservation of marine life,” he said.

“The MITF has been implementing the SIMP for several years now. This training offered additional details and understanding to improve the enforcement of seafood fraud in the territory,” said Capt. Anthony Doyle, MITF supervisor. “The MITF has uncovered violations through document reviews, and both cargo and container inspections within the SIMP, by several businesses.”

The Guam Customs and Quarantine Agency enforces various local and federal laws and regulations through the screening of arriving passengers, cargo and conveyances at Guam’s borders and ports of entry for the interdiction of illegal drugs, contraband, injurious pests and diseases, unsafe goods, counterfeit items, criminals, terrorists, and various other threats in our facilitation of legitimate trade, commerce and travel.

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