



# Department of Justice

United States Attorney Billy J. Williams  
District of Oregon

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## **CANADIAN NATIONAL PLEADS GUILTY TO DRUG CHARGE AFTER MARITIME ARREST IN INTERNATIONAL WATERS OFF OREGON COAST**

PORTLAND, Ore.—John Philip Stirling, 65, a Canadian citizen, pleaded guilty in federal court today to one count of possession with intent to distribute methamphetamine under the Maritime Drug Law Enforcement Act (MDLEA).

According to court documents, on April 9, 2019, while on a routine patrol, the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Alert detected a sailing vessel traveling north 225 nautical miles from Newport, Oregon. The vessel, named Mandalay, had a home port of Seattle, Washington and visible U.S. registration numbers. When Coast Guard personnel attempted to communicate with Stirling, he went below deck and would only respond via VHF radio. Once Coast Guard personnel determined the Mandalay was a vessel within the jurisdiction of the U.S., they boarded and found Stirling to be the vessel's sole occupant.

Stirling stated he did not have vessel documentation and refused to produce identification. Upon further questioning, Sterling's speech began to deteriorate and he displayed signs of a possible drug overdose. Coast Guard personnel administered medical aid to Stirling and evacuated him by helicopter to Astoria, Oregon. He was later transported by ambulance to Adventist Health Portland for additional treatment.

Coast Guard personnel conducted a search of the Mandalay and discovered 28 seven-gallon jugs containing liquid methamphetamine.

Under the MDLEA, Stirling faces a maximum sentence of life in prison, a \$10 million fine and five years of supervised release. Pursuant to the plea agreement, the government will recommend Stirling be sentenced to 87 months in prison. He will be sentenced on April 20, 2020 before U.S. District Court Judge Michael W. Mosman.

As part of the plea agreement, Stirling has agreed to forfeit the Mandalay.

This case was investigated by the U.S. Coast Guard Investigative Service (CGIS) and Homeland Security Investigations (HSI).

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