

SENECA eNewsletter – 1 – 19 NOV 08

Good day, shipmates.

I know this newsletter is a bit out of the 10-14 day rhythm; however, it's been a busy November for us. SAR, Boardings, an INTREPID escort, BECCES, Helo Ops, drill, fog navigation, gales ... this mission execution stuff is COOL!

If you'd like to see pictures, please check out SENECA's internet web page. Our web master and has put in some excellent content including our press releases:

<http://www.uscg.mil/lantarea/cgcSeneca/>

Click on Public Affairs on the left side.

Saturday, 01 November: Patrolled offshore; field day. I appreciate your attention to detail and the due diligence in keeping SENECA clean and sharp. I was impressed with the slaying of the mighty Dust Bunnies by many hunters.

Sunday, 02 November: Day of rest, continue to patrol offshore. Though the weather was most inviting for boardings, SENECA could only find fishing vessels that we had previously boarded.

Monday, 03 November: Boardings. SENECA's tactical control (TACON) was with USCG District Five (D5), Portsmouth, VA (USCG Mid-Atlantic Command). D5's mission for SENECA was to standby for an offshore Maritime Security interdiction. Our boarding teams inspected two fishing vessels near the Elephant Trunk Access Area.

Tuesday, 04 November: Riders and GUNEX preparations. SENECA stood into Chesapeake Bay and anchored off Little Creek Naval Amphibious Base (NAB) to pick up Afloat Training Group (ATG) shipriders. These trainers were to assist SENECA in completing an Anti-Air Warfare (AAW) Gunnery Exercise (GUNEX) that was cancelled during training earlier in the year. We gammed with CGC LEGARE, sister cutter, to recover additional ATG shipriders. [If you don't know what a "gam" is, I recommend you look it up to increase your saltiness.] The AAW GUNEX was rescheduled to 07 NOV to facilitate the mission assigned to SENECA by D5.

Wednesday, 05 November: The weather prohibited a Homeland Security boarding and cancelled our AAW GUNEX by making the seas unsafe for boat operations and reducing the ceiling for the jet to tow the GUNEX target. The wind and the seas were too much, I chose to run down swell in 18 ft seas & 40+ kt winds out of the NE and anchor the next day in the calmer waters of Chesapeake Bay, VA.

Thursday, 06 November: Storm avoidance. I fought through that gale last night to seek refuge in the Chesapeake Bay. SENECA anchored again off NAB Little Creek, VA to allow the gale off the VA/MD/DE coast to move north/northeast and for Crew Endurance Management (CEM), i.e. to get some sleep. No one got more than an hour with the cutter rolling 10-15 degrees and an occasional 30+ degree roll. However, SENECA is built to take that and more, even though her crew is not. We had some gear break free of their mounts, learned what "Secure for Sea" really means, and had a few new bruises. We definitely have a new "Sea Story" for our friends and family.

Friday, 07 November: Underway from anchorage for SAR. The F/V ALASKA was disabled 300 nautical miles east of Cape Cod with a broken clutch and 8 people on board. However, SENECA was released from the case 5 minutes after "Anchor Away" as the Cutter TYBEE was closer to respond by almost a day. I chose to continue to proceed to sea and get back in D1's area of responsibility.

Saturday, 08 November: Boarding and SAR. SENECA's boisterous boarding team boarded a F/V hailing from BARNEGAT LIGHT, NJ. After completing the boarding, SENECA steamed hard to relieve the USS GONZALES (DDG 66) who was onscene with the S/V GYPSY DANE. From our operations summary that day "... [The S/V GYPSY DANE] ... Was adrift with a fouled and broken rudder. USS GONZALES

untangled the rudder, which was wrapped with line, and rebuilt the rudder post enabling the s/v to resume its journey to Charleston. The GONZALES' efforts enabled this Canadian sailor to continue his solo journey to Charleston and [enabled] SENECA to execute its ammo on load in Earle, New Jersey on Monday." This "@ sea" stuff is a Team Sport. The efforts of our sister service's ship were much appreciated, and I told her Captain the same via the radio.

Sunday, 09 November: Rested. A quiet NFL Sunday as SENECA patrolled enroute Earle, NJ without seeing nary a fishing vessel to board despite the weather being excellent offshore.

Monday, 10 November: Ammunition onload. WEPS and his "Gun' ho" team of GM1, and GM3s trained, and executed one of the smoothest onloads I've ever seen. They completed the evolution safely ... and early. BZ, shipmates! We also enjoyed the challenging transit out of Sandy Hook Channel that provided numerous navigation and ship handling lessons to the Deck and Conning Officers with minimal entertainment to shipmates on deck. Those are the challenges that make going to sea so rewarding for me.

Tuesday, 11 November: Veterans Day & boardings. SENECA boarded F/Vs homeported in New Bedford, MA. However, our sister cutter SPENCER had a banner boarding day and completed 19 boardings; BZ, shipmates. I also directed one of the two 110' patrol boats assigned to me as Commander Task Unit (CTU) to intercept and board a fishing vessel that was suspected of drug use on board after OS1 briefed me on the intelligence. The fishing vessel was on a lookout list and had been sighted the day before by a Falcon jet from ASCC, and the whole operation was coordinated by SENECA's Combat Information Center (CIC) Team from target identification to boarding execution.

My comments to my boss on Veterans Day on our daily message: "Observed on board. Thank You to all the guardians and all our military men and women who have and are currently serving, standing the watch, and defending freedom."

Wednesday, 12 November: CTU Day. This was one of my coolest mission execution days yet. With a calm sea and 100+ commercial tuna fisherman in 50 foot or smaller vessels, SENECA's boarding teams were standing in high cotton. We put both small boats in the water with a boarding team each, invited a 110' patrol boat (CGC TYBEE, which happens to be the cutter that our XO commanded as a LT) to join us, and boarded 16 fishing vessels that day executing D1's Operation Atlantic Venture. Three of the vessels were found to be in gross violation of safety regulations, had their voyages termination by me, and were escorted by the TYBEE back to a safe port where they were inspected by Coast Guard shore personnel before getting back underway. To cap off the Coast Guard operational mission execution picture, an ASCC Falcon jet flew over the fleet and cutters while the jet surveilled the area bird dogging other fishing vessels for us to board. It was just a great day to be a Guardian. I was max'd out on Semper Paratus.

Thursday, 13 November: SAR. " 13. CTU COMMENTS: SENECA diverted 130115R NOV to locate master of capsized *F/V Costa & Corvo*. SEN onscene first light and deployed both small boats. SEN completed two different c2 searches, using small boat to complete legs on top of Georges Shoal. SEN hot deck refueled ASCC 6004 with 569 gals of jp5. SEN1 (OTH) and SEN2 (CBL) Conducted expanding square searches around liferaft and debris field associated with epirb's location. Both boats conducted multiple searches between liferaft and epirb debris field recovering epirb, two liferings, misc gear, and liferaft, which was inflated on the surface and believed to be tethered to *F/V Costa & Corvo* in 98ft of water." It was a good search day with the CGC GRAND ISLE (110 foot patrol boat) onscene and recovering the survivors from the *F/V MARY K*.

Friday, 14 November: SAR and transit. After searching through the night, we continued the search at first light with an HH60J from ASCC. We tried to search with SEN 1 search; however, the 10-12 foot seas and fog on Georges Shoal was correctly judged by the coxswain as being unsafe and unproductive. By midday the fog had rolled in hard and the seas picked up, the D1 Commander suspended the search for the *F/V Costa & Corvo*'s captain. SENECA departed the scene enroute a portcall. Below are links to some of the news stories; thank you to OSC, OPS, and others for providing them to me and you.

Press releases:

<http://www.uscgnewengland.com/go/doc/778/240695/>
http://news.bostonherald.com/news/regional/view/2008_11_13_Coast_Guard_searches_for_fisher_man_off_Cape_Cod/srvc=home&position=also
<http://www.southcoasttoday.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20081113/NEWS/81113001/1011/TOWN10>
<http://www.uscgnewengland.com/go/doc/778/240914/>

Saturday & Sunday, 15-16 November: Portcall - Boston, MA. Some well deserved rest, especially after the last week of high tempo Coast Guard operations. Our last portcall was 17 days ago in Newport, RI. We were getting a bit low on Milk and Lube Oil, and we were out of eggs ~ though we did have enough Rice & Beans and Diesel Fuel Marine (DFM) to go for another two weeks, esp. since we make a lot of water everyday. SENECA stood into Boston Harbor on another challenging navigation day with visibility less than 100 yards from the sea buoy to the pier. Fortunately, as ENS Highfield was setting up for the approach to the pier, the weather lifted to 300 yards visibility. Some assistance was also received by our friends and families on the pier who had some cars on the pier turn on their brights so we could see the corners of the pier which helped us moor safely. My father was waiting for me on the pier, which was doubly cool. He was most impressed with you all and appreciates you keeping me honest.

Monday 17 November: Fueling and Helo Ops. The fueling team did another great job by unloading 25,000 gallons of DFM with all DFM going from the fuel barge via the hoses to SENECA's fuel tanks. BZ. After getting underway on a gorgeous, yet very crisp, Fall day, we steamed hard over wonderfully calm waters to Cape Cod Bay. In the Bay we rendezvoused with ASCC's HH60J, yes the same one as the SAR case but a different crew, and conducted 19 day and night helicopter operations for training.

Tuesday 18 November: Quiet day; field day. SENECA patrolled searching for boarding opportunities. However, the fishing vessels we found were ones we've boarded this patrol. BMI's assessment was that the fishermen are heading D1's Storm Tracks Advisory on the Gale that is coming in the next 24-36 hours. I agree.

Wednesday 19 November: Patrol complete; safely moored homeport. I thank you all for a wonderful, exciting, and safe first patrol as your captain. You accomplished all that was asked of you and more. Your attitudes in difficult and dynamic operations are inspiring. I am proud to call you shipmate and to be your commanding officer.

Please have a safe and enjoyable Thanksgiving Day with your family and friends. I would like to know if you are planning on being alone for the holiday because I know many of my family and friends, let alone your shipmates, who would love to have a Guardian over for Thanksgiving.

I intend to get another eNewsletter out in the middle of this inport, if I don't, Merry Christmas and celebrate with joy the birth of my Savior, and hopefully yours. Again, I hope you spend it with family and friends, if not, please let me know so you can be welcomed into a home and not be alone on this most joyous holiday.

For family and friends of SENECA: If you would like to know more about our fine cutter and myself, please visit these web sites.

Cutter SENECA <http://www.uscg.mil/lantarea/cgcSeneca/>
USCG District One (D1) <http://www.uscgnewengland.com/go/doc/778/228815/>

Be well, God bless, Semper Paratus ~ Always Ready, Sincerely,
wjw

CDR Wm. J. "Willy" Wolter
Cutter SENECA (WMEC 906)
Inport, preparing to get underway.