

## SENECA eNewsletter – 03 – 18 January 2009

Good day, shipmates.

Happy New Year! This patrol has come at us in three phases so far: lumpy transit, flat out migrant ops, and a good liberty call in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. You have done all that has been asked of you and more. Thank you.

I've included a couple of extra items at the end of the days' activities. One is a summary of USCG activities for 2008 by the Navy Times; another is a "Thank you" to all of you from a fellow DHS member and friend of mine, and finally a little something extra at the end. Let me know if you'd like more items like this.

**Saturday, 03 January:** Underway. A bright, sunny, winter day standing out of port with a bit of off the dock wind to keep things interesting for the Conning Officer (CONN). Prior to getting underway the command Chaplain came aboard, provided a prayer service, gave communion, and said a prayer at Quarters. The seas offshore were "lumpy" to quote our Executive Officer (XO).

**Sunday, 04 January:** Transited south in lumpiness.

**Monday, 05 January:** Nice weather for transiting.

**Tuesday, 06 January:** Transiting.

**Wednesday, 07 January:** Transiting & reported in early to our Tactical Commander, District Seven (D7). We had been scheduled to get in our gunnery exercise to complete our training requirements from last summer's Tailored Annual Cutter Training (TACT). Unfortunately, SENECA was bumped from use of the jets to tow the target by a Carrier Strike Group's pre-deployment preparations for Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). Our pleasant, persistent XO will continue to work with LANTAREA and ATG to see if we can get a waiver and seek another opportunity.

**Thursday, 08 January:** Transited Old Bahaman Channel (OBC) north of Cuba. With this transit, SENECA exercised an age old maritime concept called Freedom of Navigation where a ship, cutter in our case, can transit through a country's territorial seas because the navigation route is historically the shortest distance or the only route. In the case of the OBC, SENECA traveled well within Cuba's 12 nautical mile territorial sea limit. As we transited the OBC, we observed some leviathans exercising their natural right to do the same thing as we observed three Humpback Whales within 1500 yards of the starboard bow. One breached fully out of the water. All I saw was the splash. Another came up about a third out of the water like that Pacific Life logo. Both very cool. The CONN, under the able direction of the Officer of the Deck, slowed the cutter immediately to ensure that we knew which way the whales were proceeding before SENECA resumed course and speed.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humpback\\_whales](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humpback_whales)

**Friday, 09 January:** Migrant Interdiction. It was good that we were able to report in early and get down to the Windward Pass (WWP) Area of Operations (AOR) as Cutter BEAR had been trailing a migrant vessel and was waiting for us to interdict them. This morning we started in earnest with the four small boats from BEAR and SENECA recovering 100 Haitians from the treacherous and highly trafficked waters north of the southeast coast of Cuba. The migrants were brought aboard SENECA to enable BEAR to proceed to a well deserved portcall in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. 100 lives saved: 76 adult males, 20 adult females (2 in first trimester), 2 boys, and 2 girls (youngest about 3 years old).

<http://www.miamiherald.com/news/americas/AP/story/849617.html>

<http://www.d7publicaffairs.com/>

Haiti: <http://www.state.gov/p/wha/ci/ha/>

<http://www.uscg.mil/lantarea/cgcBear/default.asp>

SENECA Casino Night was held with everyone getting a wad of SENECA Bucks and able to buy another for \$5 to the Morale Fund. Our banker, CWO2 Don Wiley, was out of SENECA Bucks quite quickly. There was Horse Racing and Black Jack on the Mess Deck with big games of Texas Hold 'em dealt by FSC in the Chiefs Mess and MPA in the Wardroom. Folks who won SENECA Bucks were able to bid at the prize raffle at the end of gambling. Lots of fun was had by over half of us that participated. The big winner earned himself an iPod Shuffle.

**Saturday, 10 January:** Patrolled off the northwest coast of Haiti awaiting disposition instructions on where to return our 100 guests.

**Sunday, 11 January:** Continued to patrol off the northwest coast of Haiti while awaiting disposition instructions on our 100 guests. D7 completed coordinating with the Haitian Government and Coast Guard (HCG) to enable SENECA to return our Haitian guests to Cap Haitien, Haiti on their north coast.

**Monday, 12 January:** Cap Haitien, Haiti; repatriation. SENECA anchored in the harbor out of the way of the main commercial pier. Two HCG vessels embarked our guests and brought them to shore where they were met by US Embassy and Haitian Government officials who provided them a ride to their hometowns and a stipend. They are well taken care of which is verified by our State Department personnel. While disembarking our guests a Coast Guard aircraft spotted another Haitian sail freighter with an estimated 50 people on board in a position similar to where we interdicted this group. Coast Guard jets and aircraft flew on the sail freighter throughout the day. Once SENECA disembarked all our guests we proceeded out of Cap Haitien and then made best speed to the position of the sail freighter. SENECA arrived on scene after sunset with the sail freighter. D7 had turned the Cutter CONFIDENCE (with VIGILANT's crew) around in the Old Bahama Channel to provide SENECA support. The weather was okay, but the people should not be in the open sail freighter. As it was dark, I decided that CONFIDENCE and SENECA would trail the sail freighter through the night and recover the Haitians from the sea at first light.

<http://www.uscg.mil/d7/airstaMiami/default.asp>

<http://www.uscg.mil/lantarea/cgVigilant/default.asp>

(VIGILANT's crew on CONFIDENCE for MEP)

**Tuesday, 13 January:** Interdiction and Small Boat Mishap. At first light both of CONFIDENCE's and SENECA's small boats were in the water and began recovering Haitians from their 40 foot open sail freighter. Also on scene was an HH60J forward deployed to OPBAT (Operation Bahamas and Turks and Caicos) from CG Air Station Clearwater, FL. After recovery 37 people (32 adult males, 2 adult females, and 3 boys), SENECA proceeded to set up to destroy the sail freighter since it was an unlit hazard to navigation. During the personnel and equipment transfer to set up the destruction, SENECA's largest small boat with 7 shipmates and our Haitian (Creole) interpreter swamped in 88 degree water and rolled over as it made an approach on SENECA's starboard quarter. We quickly determined that all 8 of our friends and shipmates were okay and then recovered them in a professional and prudent manner. I am very proud of your reactions and response during this incident. You did not let your concern for our shipmates interfere with you taking immediate action to be ready to recovery them from the sea.

SENECA used her organic creativity to develop a procedure to right the overturned boat.

OPBAT is sourced from CG Air Station Clearwater: <http://www.uscg.mil/d7/airstaClearwater/>

**Wednesday, 14 January:** Repatriated 37 guests to Port au Prince, Haiti. We conducted Helicopter Operations (landing, 5 "Touch & Go"s for training) with BEAR to transfer our Royal Bahamian Shiprider back to BEAR to support our safety of life at sea and migrant interdiction partnership with our Bahamian neighbors.

See <http://www.d7publicaffairs.com/> see "Coast Guard repatriates 37 Haitian migrants" article which has two photos.

**Thursday, 15 January:** Portcall in Guantanamo Bay Cuba. After onloading stores, refueling, and cleaning up our cutter. We all, except our duty section/break-ins/mess cooks/fueling detail, departed on some well deserved liberty kicked off by an excellent Bowling Tournament where a third of us showed off our skills, or lack there of.

**Friday, 16 January:** Portcall in Guantanamo Bay Cuba. SENECA held a beach party at Cable Beach. A Critical

Incident Stress Management (CISM) team arrived to offer counseling and insight on how the capsizing of our small boat might affect us individually over time. I appreciate your taking care of each other by talking about it, at least once, with someone you trust. You enjoyed the sun, volleyball, and "beach" of Cable Beach on GTMO's southeast coast.

CISM: <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cg3/cg3pcx/administration/fv157.asp>

**Saturday, 17 January:** Portcall in Guantanamo Bay Cuba. Lots more to do in Guantanamo Bay, which is not a big city but it does have tons of Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) activities. A number of folks ended up at the Lyceum outdoor/drive-in theater for the double feature of Twilight and Gran Torino. I tried my sticks on MWR's Yatera Seca Golf Course earlier in the day. I walked nine and played 18; go figure. It was hot (90F+) but I was still playing golf in January.

A few of us were able to get a tour of Guantanamo Bay and the Joint Task Force Guantanamo detainee operation by the USCGC's Port Security Unit's (PSU) Operations Officer. He used a favor to have the JTF Commander's Flag Aide, give us the same brief all the VIPs get. It was an insightful and informative tour and brief. I echo his pride in the great young Americans doing an outstanding job in an extremely challenging, stressful, and media unpopular mission. PSU 305 provides water and some shore security to the JTF Guantanamo mission, which they and the other PSUs and a USCG Maritime Safety and Security Team (MSST) have been doing since the JTF Mission started about five years ago.

JTF Guantanamo: <http://www.jtfgtmo.southcom.mil/> click on "About"

"JTF Guantanamo conducts safe, humane, legal and transparent care and custody of detained enemy combatants, including those convicted by military commission and those ordered released."

PSU 305: <http://www.uscg.mil/lantarea/psu305/default.asp>

**Sunday, 18 January:** Underway and back on patrol.

\*\*\*\*\* USCG 2008 Highlights \*\*\*\*\*

The Navy Times Monday, December 29, 2008

Coast Guard lists 2008 highlights

Staff report

The Coast Guard seized nearly 400,000 pounds of cocaine and more than 22,000 pounds of marijuana in fiscal 2008. Members also saved nearly 5,000 lives, marking the end of a record year of drug seizures and rescues.

The service also released its Top 10 videos for the year on Dec. 23, which includes a drug bust by boarding teams from the cutter Midgett that netted about \$196 million worth of cocaine from a self-propelled, semi-submersible submarine. Another video shows the rescue of a pilot and her dog from a crashed plane.

The videos can be seen here

([http://cgvi.uscg.mil/media/main.php?g2\\_itemId=442632](http://cgvi.uscg.mil/media/main.php?g2_itemId=442632)) or through the Coast Guard's YouTube channel.

Other 2008 highlights include:

Restoration of critical ports and waterways in the wake of hurricanes Gustav and Ike.

680 Great Lakes icebreaking operations that allowed the transport of more than \$2 billion in cargo.

The interdiction of more than 4,800 migrants attempting to illegally enter the United States.

More than 76,000 pounds of humanitarian supplies delivered to the Republic of Georgia during Operation Assured Delivery.

URL: [http://www.navytimes.com/news/2008/12/coastguard\\_drugseizures\\_122908/](http://www.navytimes.com/news/2008/12/coastguard_drugseizures_122908/)

\*\*\*\*\* A thank you \*\*\*\*\*

Happy and Blessed New Year to you, your family and your crew. Please thank the crew from me. I truly appreciate what you all do.

Chief

FIRST Operational Planning and Logistics FEMA Region X

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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> ; we are having some issues with it and will advise when it's fully functional.

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

CDR Wm. J. "Willy" Wolter Cutter  
SENECA (WMEC 906)  
~ Underway; patrolling our East Coast ~

\*\*\*\*\* Something extra \*\*\*\*\*

Subject: You could hear a pin drop.

When in England , at a fairly large conference, Colin Powell { retired Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff & former Secretary of State } was asked by the Archbishop of Canterbury if our plans for Iraq were just an example of empire building by George Bush.

He answered by saying, 'Over the years, the United States has sent many of its fine young men and women into great peril to fight for freedom beyond our borders. The only amount of land we have ever asked for in return is enough to bury those that did not return.'

You could have heard a pin drop.

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