

Dear family and friends of SPENCER,

I hope this email finds you well. SPENCER is currently finishing up a 35-day patrol in support of the First Coast Guard District and a War of 1812 Fleet Exercise. While patrolling the waters off of New England, SPENCER's law enforcement teams boarded 23 fishing vessels to verify compliance with fisheries and safety regulations. The information our boarding teams gathered during these inspections also helps gauge the health of the industry and the fish stocks. One highlight of our work for the First District was a .50 caliber machine gun training exercise in which our gunners fired 1200 rounds of ammunition. We've got some real snipers on board SPENCER, led by a top-notch division of gunner's mates.

Our port calls included Portland, Maine and Staten Island, New York. Many of you were able to see your loved ones during these port calls since we were so close to home. Both stops were very popular with the crew, and I expect we may be returning in the near future.

During the last week of our deployment, we were involved in the War of 1812 Fleet Exercise involving 19 ships from eight countries, including Germany, Brazil, Canada, United Kingdom, Portugal, Denmark, Norway, and the United States. SPENCER was the only Coast Guard participant. Working with NATO was a shift in gears for our folks. Steaming in close formation with other navy vessels, sending and receiving classified tactical signals (TACSIGs), and defending a task group from air, surface, submarine, and mine threats are not tasks we conduct routinely. Our performance during this exercise illustrates to me, once again, the unparalleled will and skill of Coasties. For example, 36 hours after the exercise started, our TACSIGs team in the combat information center finished first out of five ships in a signaling exercise! Two days later, we conducted a gun shoot with the USS GONZALES. We fired 600 rounds of .50 caliber, 600 rounds of 7.62mm (M240 machine gun), and 25 rounds of 76mm (our main gun) ammo at remote-controlled boats. Our 76mm gun crews and combat electronics technicians were so accurate that we had to double our imposed offset in order not to hit the target. There was no daylight between where the rounds were landing, and the target itself!! We could not have been more accurate without hitting the target (which we were not authorized to do!).

I have attached two documents. The first is a copy of our inaugural newsletter that encapsulates our last six months. Some of the information may be old news to many of you, but there are some unique features included as well. Look for "A View from the Deckplates" in this and future newsletters. It is written by a crewmember and chronicles a "day in the life" on board SPENCER. Our public affairs program is ramping up. I am excited about the kinds of products we are starting to produce for you and the crew.

The second document is a press release SPENCER drafted describing the experiences of two of our shipmates who volunteered to stand duty in St. Paul, Alaska this winter.

Special thanks to Betsy Jones, our ombudsman, for her continued great work in support of SPENCER and our families. During our port call in Portland, it was a pleasure for me to award her a Certificate of Appreciation from the Coast Guard Commandant, Admiral Papp, and the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard, Master Chief Leavitt, recognizing Betsy for her dedication. Bravo Zulu for a job well done Betsy! Please contact Betsy if you have any concerns while we're underway, or there is a family emergency. We will do all we can to help.

We return home soon for a couple weeks then transit to Little Creek, Virginia for annual helicopter and shipboard refresher training. I hope you enjoy the short July in port period with your loved ones from SPENCER. I am proud of them for their resilience at sea, toughness, teamwork, enthusiasm, and dedicated service to our country.

Very respectfully,  
CDR Geoff Gagnier  
Commanding Officer  
USCGC SPENCER (WMEC 905)