

7th Coast Guard District
U.S. Coast Guard

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**United States
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News Release

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Coast Guard interdicts 2,654 pounds of cocaine in Caribbean Sea

Crewmembers from the Coast Guard Cutter Valiant and Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron interdict 2,654 pounds of cocaine from a 32-foot go-fast vessel in the Caribbean Sea May 31, 2012. The cocaine has a wholesale value of \$32.5 million dollars. U.S. Coast Guard photo.

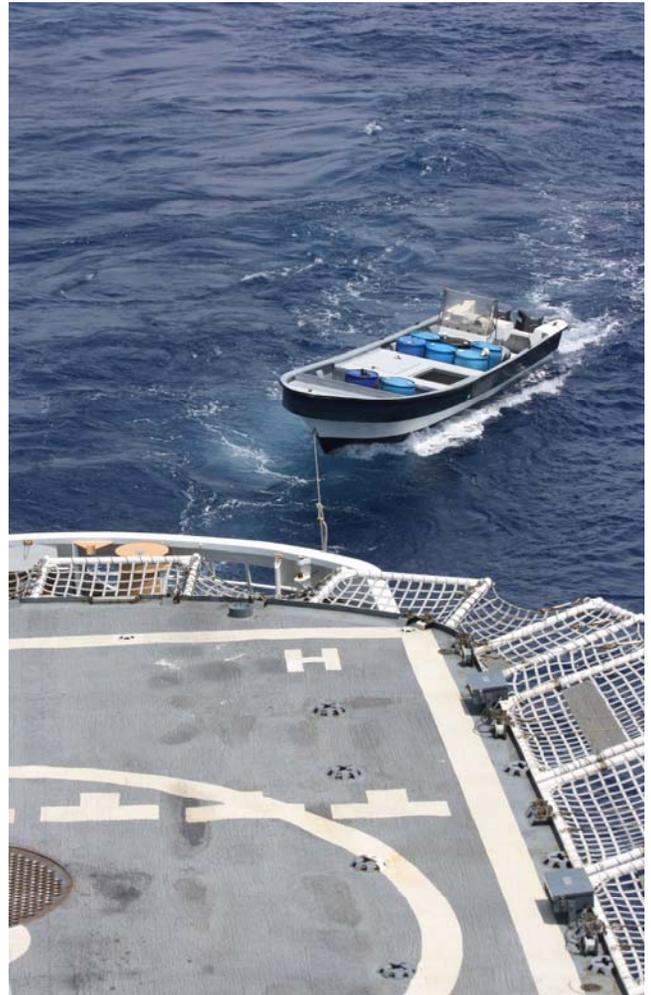


Above: Coast Guard Cutter Valiant crew and the HH-65 helicopter with seized bales on the flight deck. The interdicted go-fast vessel is driven alongside the cutter by two members of the Valiant crew.



Left: Coast Guard Cutter Valiant boat crew members transfer the bales of cocaine to the ship. CGC Valiant interdicted and recovered 2,654 pounds of cocaine from a go-fast smuggling vessel.

Below: Coast Guard Cutter Valiant tows the 32 foot go-fast. Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron (HITRON) fired warning shots and disabling fire to stop the vessel.



Above: Coast Guard Cutter Valiant Boarding Officer tests the contraband interdicted on May 31, 2012 and verifies the substance is cocaine.



Left: The interdicted bales of cocaine accounted for onboard Coast Guard Cutter Valiant.

MIAMI — On May 31, while on patrol in the Caribbean Sea, [Coast Guard Cutter Valiant](#) and its crew interdicted a 32-foot go-fast vessel carrying 2,654 pounds of cocaine, worth a total wholesale value of \$32.5 million dollars.

Working with U.S. Navy and other international partners, Valiant's embarked helicopter crew from the Coast Guard Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron (HITRON), based in Jacksonville, Florida, spotted a go-fast vessel outfitted for smuggling with five crewmembers aboard and bales on deck.

After the requesting the vessel to stop, the go-fast maneuvered erratically and jettisoned the drugs in an attempt to evade the helicopter. First employing warning shots and then disabling fire, the rounds into the outboard engines sufficiently slowed the go-fast, enabling Valiant's Law Enforcement Team to board the go-fast vessel and detain the five suspected smugglers.

The Nicaraguan Naval, partners in Caribbean counter-drug operations, helped Valiant recover 43 bales of cocaine throughout the early morning hours. The bales tested positive for cocaine.

Captain McPherson, Chief of Law Enforcement for the Coast Guard's Seventh District, congratulated Valiant on a great seizure, noting that the crew did, "a terrific job safely effecting end-game in support of Operation Martillo while also dealing with some difficult tactical circumstances."

Operation Martillo, an international operation focused on sharing information and bringing together air, land, and maritime assets from the U.S. Department of Defense, the Department of Homeland Security, and Western Hemisphere and European partner nations, is one component in the United States whole-of-government approach to countering the use of the Central American transshipment routes for illicit drugs, weapons, and cash.

Approaching the end of his two year tour and his last patrol on board, Commander Dettleff, Valiant's Commanding Officer, said, "The crew is in the middle of a major turnover of personnel, as the cutter prepares to move homeports from Miami Beach to Mayport, Florida later this summer. We sailed from Miami Beach on May 21st with 25% new crew members, who are making their first patrol aboard Valiant. It was immensely gratifying for me to see our seasoned, proficient shipmates leading our new folks through qualifications and certifications, while watching both groups operate seamlessly with our embarked seven-person HITRON aircrew to pull off this perfectly executed seizure."

Petty Officer Jorge Gomez, coxswain of the Valiant's small boat that was the first surface asset on scene with the go-fast, summarized the cohesiveness required to carry out the mission, "When it's just you and your crew, 40 miles from the nearest asset, pitch black, that's when you know these are the guys that are your shipmates. You have their back and they have yours. That's the Coast Guard, and that's just what we do and who we are."

The cutter Valiant is a 210-foot medium-endurance cutter. In August, the ship will permanently move from Coast Guard Base Miami Beach to Naval Station Mayport. The ship was commissioned Nov. 3, 1967, and despite its 45 years of service in an aging fleet, its crew successfully carries out the missions of law enforcement, search and rescue, and homeland security.
