

USCGC VIGOROUS (WMEC 627)
Ship's History



Throughout over 45 years of service to the nation, CGC VIGOROUS has patrolled the eastern seaboard from Greenland to South America enforcing maritime laws including U.S. fishery regulations; counter drug laws and immigration laws. Additionally, CGC VIGOROUS has “stood the watch” and protected hundreds of mariners in distress, protected the sea in environmental law enforcement and helped maintain our national security.

VIGOROUS was commissioned in May 1969 and for nearly 23 years was home ported in New London, CT at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy. On 29 July, 1970 CGC VIGOROUS became the first 210-foot cutter to cross the Arctic Circle. This took place while she was part of the 1970 Cadet Cruise Squadron. On 31 January 1975, CGC VIGOROUS was the first cutter to make a seizure of a foreign-flag fishing vessel on the high seas when she seized the Italian fishing vessel *Tontini Pesca Cuarto* for illegally taking lobster.

The decade of the 1970's saw VIGOROUS heavily engaged in the enforcement of the Continental Shelf Fisheries Resource Regulations. In 1975 and 1976 alone, VIGOROUS seized seven foreign trawlers resulting in over \$1,000,000 in fines.

During the 1980's, VIGOROUS saved over 700 Cubans during the Mariel Exodus. Additionally, VIGOROUS seized over 300,000 pounds of marijuana and 30,000 pounds of hashish, all with a combined street value over \$410,000,000. The most notable cases of that decade were the seizures of over 40 tons of marijuana from the vessel D'MILIUS ONE, over 30 tons of marijuana from the vessel JOSE GREGORIO and over 27 tons of marijuana from the vessel DIMANTE. Additionally, VIGOROUS hosted several high level visitors, highlighted by visits from Vice President George Bush in 1983 and President Ronald Reagan in 1988, during the Statue of Liberty Centennial Celebration in New York Harbor.

VIGOROUS remained extremely busy in the 1990's. VIGOROUS was decommissioned in 1992 for one year and was then the first "B" class 210-foot cutter to complete Major Maintenance Availability at the Coast Guard Yard in Curtis Bay, MD where obsolete systems were upgraded extending her service life. Commissioned again in January 1993, VIGOROUS was assigned homeport at Training Center Cape May, NJ, the birthplace of the Coast Guard's enlisted Corps.

VIGOROUS responded to both the mass Haitian exodus in 1994 (Operation Able Manner) and the Cuban exodus of 1994 (Operation Able Vigil). VIGOROUS continued her expertise in law enforcement and fisheries as evidenced by the narcotic seizures of vessel MISS REBA O, carrying over 12 tons of marijuana, and Fishing Vessels EDGARTOWN and ITALIAN PRINCESS.

The tragic events of 11 September 2001 propelled the cutter into the Coast Guard's important Homeland Security mission, with VIGOROUS participating in port security activities in Boston, MA, the Hampton Roads, VA area, and offshore of Wilmington, NC. Following the events of 9/11, VIGOROUS in a cooperative effort with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency and U.S. Customs Service interdicted vessel TRYING TOGETHER and seized close to 1,000 pounds of marijuana. In 2007, VIGOROUS completed the seven-month Mission Effectiveness Project (MEP) at the Coast Guard Yard to enhance its mission capabilities. While the cutter was undergoing repairs and upgrades, the crew served aboard the USCGC RELIANCE for one patrol in the Straits of Florida in which they interdicted 25 illegal migrants. In addition, the crew oversaw the safe care and repatriation of 390 Cuban migrants. After completing MEP VIGOROUS resumed law enforcement operations. During the course of four Mid-Atlantic and New England fisheries patrols, the crew completed 142 boardings in support of Operation Atlantic Venture and Ocean Hunter, resulting in two voyage terminations and 65 fisheries or vessel safety violations. In addition, VIGOROUS participated in a joint operation with the Canadian Coast Guard along the US/Canadian border (the Hague Line). 2009 proved to be an outstanding year for law enforcement with the discovery and seizure of 1,746 kgs of cocaine. VIGOROUS detected and boarded the Motor Vessel CAPT LEM, a Honduran-flagged cargo vessel, and after a thorough inspection noted an empty tank in the vessel. Upon opening the tank, 77 bales (more than 3,500 pounds) of cocaine were discovered.

In 2012 while conducting a JIATF South patrol, VIGOROUS interdicted Motor Vessel FORTUNA and after full space accountability the boarding team located a hidden compartment with 145 pounds of cocaine and 245 pounds of marijuana. VIGOROUS conducted a tow of the vessel through heavy seas 1,200 nautical miles to Miami, then sent a boarding team ashore to work with CBP to locate additional narcotics inside the ballast tanks. In February 2013, VIGOROUS once again proved its dedication to the nation by responding to the Carnival cruise ship TRIUMPH, which was disabled and adrift with over 4,000 people onboard. In May 2014, VIGOROUS steamed over 1300 nautical miles east of New York City to assist the U.K. in the search for the survivors of the Sailing Vessel CHEEKI RAFIKI, overturned and adrift after hull failure in storm conditions. VIGOROUS and the USS OSCAR AUSTIN were the only U.S. ships poised to respond to the search efforts far offshore in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean.

On July 31, 2014 CGC VIGOROUS and her sister ship, CGC DEPENDABLE, were re-assigned to Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek Fort Story, Virginia Beach, VA. In 2015, while operating in support of UNITED RESOLVE, CGC VIGOROUS worked in conjunction with MSST, TACLET and local law enforcement units to interdict a Go-Fast vessel carrying over 1,200 lbs of cocaine. This was the largest drug bust VIGOROUS had since 2009.

This winter, CGC VIGOROUS will be heading to Brooklyn, New York to undergo routine maintenance and repair before returning to full operations in support of maritime safety, security and environmental stewardship.

Through her 45 years of service, VIGOROUS proudly looks back on her history and stands "PARATUS GERERE" (Ready to Act) in response to the challenges that lie ahead.