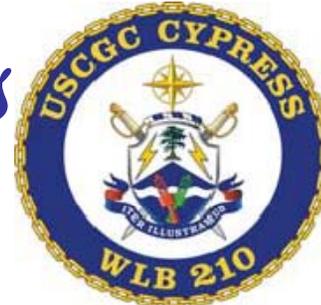


Cypress Times

Quarterly Newsletter



Interesting Facts

-7 tons of contraband was recovered from the drug sub equivalent to the weight of a full grown African elephant

-EM3 Schumann was the Sailor of the Quarter for this month, meaning that his attention to detail and superior performance of his duties set him apart from the other crewmembers.

-BMC Carawan, MK1 Prescott, EMC Burke, and BM2 Gonzales all previously served in either the army or navy before joining the Coast Guard

Drug Sub + FBI Divers+ CGC CYPRESS = One Hell of an Operation

By: LTJG Kurt Walker

A self propelled semi submersible (SPSS) is a vessel that sits extremely low in the water with a free board of only a few feet. They are typically painted a grayish black so as to blend in with the ocean. From the bridge of a ship or the cockpit of a plane they are incredibly difficult to spot thus making them ideal platforms to sneak contraband into the United States of America. They generally have a small crew and very limited living space because the sub is packed to absolute capacity with contraband. When the Coast Guard first came across SPSSs years ago they were quite frustrating to deal with because the crew of the sub would scuttle the vessel prior to being boarded and the contraband being removed. The vessels are specifically designed to be quickly sunk via valves for multiple reasons. The drug smugglers don't want the United States to be able to recover contraband for prosecution of the SPSS crew. The Coast Guard would pick up the sub crews in the water after the vessel had sunk and it couldn't be proved that they had been transporting contraband, hence they couldn't be arrested, just repatriated. Fortunately, a law was passed that made it illegal for anyone to operate an SPSS so now when the crew of a sub is caught and they sink we could still try them in court.

This past fall in October the CYPRESS was presented with an opportunity to take on an FBI tactical dive team and go down to the designated operationing area to recover contraband from a sunken SPSS. The trip commenced officially on the 10th of October but due to equipment casualties we had to pull in the following day and then we left again this time for good on the 12th of October. We arrived on scene the 17th of October and started with the FBI using an underwater sonar image scanner to ascertain the drug sub's position. Once located the recovery

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commenced. I will describe a typical diving evolution, two members at a time got dressed out in full gear complete with fins, mask, air tank, video cables, and depending upon the nature of the work a helmet. Once in the water they would descend down to the sub and commence working whether it be cutting the sub open or recovering the contraband. Upon emerging they would climb a ladder and get scrubbed down by other members of the team, and the whole process would start over again. The goal each day was to try to get the most dives in possible. Eventually, after the necessary cuts in the hull had been made large amounts of contraband were being recovered each time that the divers went down to the wreck. A surface swimmer would be deployed into the water to recover the contraband that the divers on the seafloor were sending up to the top. Fortunately, most of the contraband floated up. A line was fixed to the sub that went all the way to surface of the ocean and the drug bales were clipped into the line and floated up to the top where the surface swimmer was waiting. The swimmer would then unclip the line and then clip it into a tag line for personnel onboard the ship to haul up for storage. The CYPRESS small boat was also an invaluable asset to have because they recovered hundreds of small individual kilos (about the size of a tissue box) that floated up from the wreckage and began to drift away. When all of the contraband had been recovered the total amount was in excess of 7 tons which has a street value of well over a 180 million dollars. Upon leaving op area we sailed up to Sector St. Petersburg for offload where we were greeted by the District 7 and JIATF (Joint Inter Agency Task Force) admirals to thank us for a job well done. The mission overall was a huge success and a lot of valuable lessons were learned for any potential future operations. The crew of the CYPRESS performed admirably and will certainly be able to reflect on the mission for the rest of their lives.



The 2011 CYPRESS Christmas Party

BY: LTJG Christina Mandour-Brackin

On Friday, December 2, CYPRESS celebrated the holidays with our Christmas Party! Our Assistant Morale Officer, ENS Kyle Reese, was hard at work for weeks before the party, putting everything together. At BMC Carawan's suggestion, the Morale Committee chose the NAS Pensacola Chief's Club at Lighthouse Point. We arranged for a caterer, and the cooks kindly loaned us their big stereo and speakers for holiday music. ET2 Jones came up with the idea of setting up a box for Toys for Tots, and he contacted the Marines personally to coordinate.

YN3 Thompson went with Mr. Reese to buy the holiday decorations, and then on her own time, handcrafted beautiful, fire-safe centerpieces for every table! On the day of the party, YN3 Thompson, SN Taylor, and ENS Reese and his wife Stephanie arrived at noon and spent several hours setting up the room. They put tablecloths on every table, set up a crafts table for the kids, raised a festive Christmas tree, and even provided a Santa couch complete with a Santa sack, handsewn by Mrs. Reese, full of pretend presents!

The Morale Officer arrived at five bearing a stack of raffle prizes, and took over check-writing and raffle set-up while the caterers bustled to and fro with big pots and pans of holiday food and the piece de resistance—the chocolate fountain! Guests started arriving right at six, decked out in their holiday finest, some of them vying for Tackiest Christmas Sweater, and others bringing big-eyed kids who rushed over to the raffle table to stake out their favorite prizes.

After dinner came the raffle! First, we handed out six gift cards—for Best Buy, Mellow Mushroom, and Target. Next, SN Reeve was the lucky winner of the Garmin GPS. Mrs. Reese was rewarded for all her hard work by a relaxing trip to the spa worth \$100. Ops won the new Kindle. BM1 Hamontree and his delighted kids walked away with two four-day passes to Disney World. And MK1 Prescott won the iPod Touch! After the raffle, we heard a bell ringing out in the hallway. The kids all rushed out to see who it was—and sure enough, Santa Claus and his Elf had arrived! Kids sat on Santa's lap and told him what they wanted for Christmas, while our Elf rocked his red and green tights and jingly shoes like a pro. Our very patient Santa then headed out onto the dance floor and rocked out with the kids. Thanks to MK1 Prescott and ET2 Jones for being an awesome Santa and Elf!

The party kept going until midnight, when the last few guests headed out. Our party was a great success. Not only did everyone have a blast, but we collected a big stack of Toys for Tots! Thanks so much to the entire crew for your participation and especially to those who helped with the prep and clean-up after. Happy Holidays!



Links in the Chain

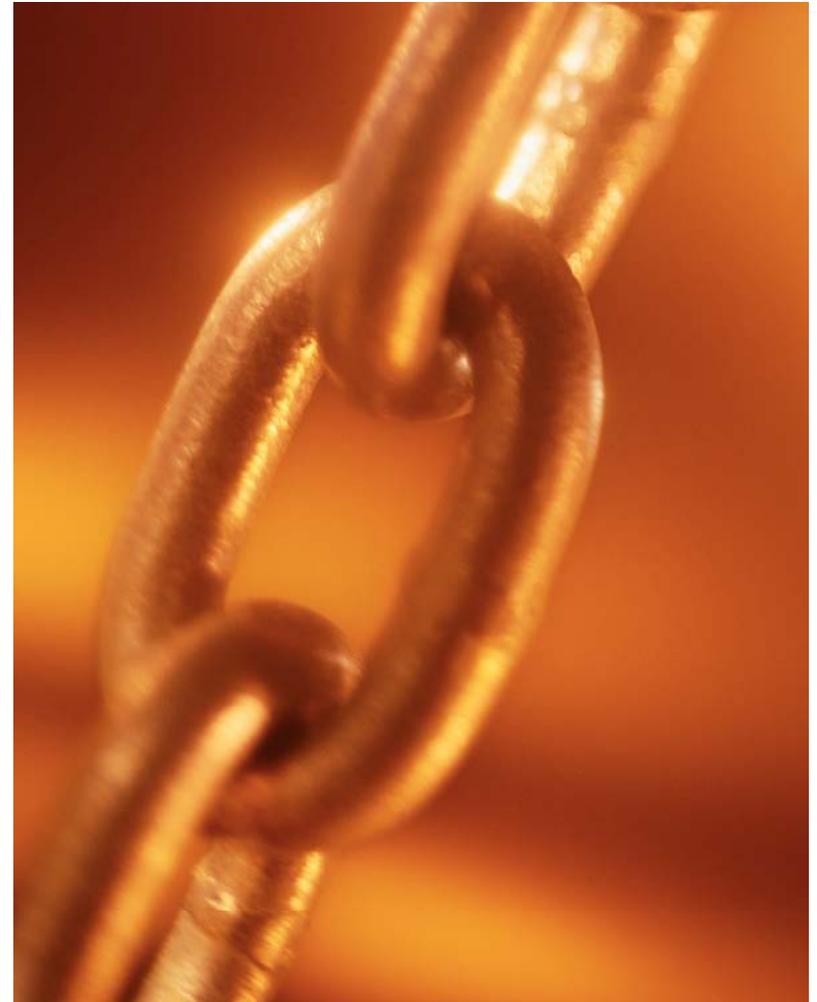
By: Kurt Walker

Hello again, CYPRESS newsletter readers this edition I will be focusing on the Food Service Specialist position onboard the ship as well as the oiler both vitally important jobs.

The food service specialists are responsible for providing meals to the entire crew three times a day, every day of the year. There is always a cook on duty and they create a wide variety of dishes from filet mignon to beef wellington to crawfish etouffee. In order to accomplish this they work long hours in the galley starting the day before most of the crew is awake and not finishing until long after the work day has been completed. For our ship the galley (aka the cooking facility) is allotted over \$15,000 each month to feed all the crew members. It is quite a lot of responsibility to keep track of all those funds as well as going through the correct vendors. Cooking the food is only part of the job, there is a whole other administrative side that can be easily overlooked. The food service specialists are always looking out for the crew often delaying putting away the food until evolutions can be completed so that everyone can eat. I know that I speak for everyone on the ship when I say that I truly appreciate our food service specialists and the excellent job that they do.

The next position that I am going to cover is the oiler. This is very important and necessary qualification for all engineers to obtain. The oiler makes rounds of all the equipment that is running on the ship and ensures that everything is running smoothly. If problems are encountered they will troubleshoot initially and inform their superiors so that it can be fixed as soon as possible. Another aspect of the oiler position is that they are the ship's first line of defense if a casualty occurs. They are trained to do a pre-determined checklist to prevent as much damage to the machinery that they can. In order to become an oiler each engineer must become proficient in their ability to respond to BECCES (Basic Engineering Casualty Control Exercises), some examples of BECCES are Fuel Oil Leak on a main diesel engine or a crankcase explosion. Furthermore, they have to draw virtually every system on the boat so that they know how it works and where the important valves are. Almost all oilers are junior members but the work they perform is of the utmost significance and requires a great deal of competence and responsibility.

Next issue look for the deck force and Underway OOD.



CYPRESS in Action



Captain's Corner

Hello CYPRESS family!

The 1st quarter of fiscal year 2012 started off with a bang. CYPRESS was tagged to support District Seven and we headed south towards Honduras with a FBI dive team onboard. Once on scene we recovered about seven tons of illegal drugs from a sunken self-propelled semi submersible (SPSS) drug boat. That sounds simple but the weather presented a challenge, as does any dive operation. The drugs were mostly single kilos, soaked in oil and fuel, and required a lot of work to recover, wrap, and stow. Your crew did an outstanding job and no one was injured. We didn't make any port calls during the trip and headed to St. Petersburg, FL for offload. We were welcomed by media and two Admirals. If your crewmember hasn't shown you the DVD of the operation, ask them to. Our planned haunted ship was a casualty of this operation, but operations come first.

November and December had us setting up and deploying our Spilled Oil Recovery System (SORS) gear for annual refresher training. The training showed that our gear was not maintained properly and returned to us after Deepwater Horizon operations with some missing parts. It was good to find the problems and ensure we're ready to go for any real world mission. That's what training is for.

December contained some ATON trips and a nice breather for the holidays.

Looking ahead, you need to prepare yourselves for the cutter to be away from home for our two month dry dock in Tampa Bay. We'll grant leave as able and I hope that you all can come down and visit your crewmember while we're there. The Tampa/St. Pete (and Orlando) area has a lot to offer.

We are on tap to support District Seven for a thirty day patrol during the summer. You'll want to make sure that you're prepared with a power of attorney and any necessary hurricane season items. You have a big job being the shore-side support for your crewmember. Ensuring you're ready allows your crewmember to do their job with less worrying.

The Commandant has signed the decision memo approving the homeport shift from Mobile to Pensacola. We are supposed to have final approval (through congressional offices) by the end of January.

Thanks for all that you do. Start planning for hurricane season and utilize the OMBUDSMAN, Jamie Burke, for questions. You're also welcome to call me or the XO, LT Chris Tuckey.

Semper Paratus!

-LCDR Paul Morgan