

THANKSGIVING PATROL 2011

DECEMBER 2011



PATROL SUMMARY

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VIGILANT departed Cape Canaveral on Halloween for a second consecutive patrol in support of Joint Inter-agency Task Force—South. Our travels would again take us to the deep Caribbean to execute the Coast Guard’s drug interdiction mission. Before we arrived in theater, we made a brief detour in the Florida Straits for a couple of days as we became a holding platform for 65 Cuban migrants. With the help of a few Key West patrol boats, we helped repatriate all migrants to Cuba.

We then began a long transit to the Eastern Caribbean. On our way, we stopped in Barbados to resupply and give the crew a well-deserved rest. Despite the pouring rain on the second day, Barbados was an excellent port call. The highlight may have been the intense beach volleyball match that was ultimately called due to darkness.

Before our next stop in Aruba, we partnered with the Brazilian and British navies to deter illicit trafficking off the NE coast of South America. We arrived in Aruba on Thanksgiving Day, so we celebrated the night before with a delicious feast prepared by our Galley Staff. Many of the crew thought Aruba was the best port call VIGILANT had in recent years. Our engineers may beg to differ as they worked two hard days installing cylinder heads on one of the engines. After Aruba, we got our first taste of the mission as we helped the CGC GALLATIN with their prosecution of approximately 1,500 lbs of cocaine and five drug smugglers by transferring contraband and detainees to another asset. After a port visit to the Panamanian island of Bocas del Toro, we were back at it and became the holding platform for another 2,600 lbs of cocaine and 20 suspected drug smugglers interdicted by a US Navy asset. As lawyers back in the States worked to determine their fate, we towed the seized vessel and kept watch over the drugs and detainees for over five days. Ultimately, VIGILANT and her crew helped keep about \$100 million dollars of cocaine off American streets and prevented 65 Cuban nationals from illegally crossing our borders. Another job well done!



FROM THE CAPTAIN’S CHAIR

CDR Estramonte on the bridge during the drug and detainee transfer with CGC SPENCER



Happy Holidays! As another patrol comes to end, I reflect upon all the good things our crew accomplished over the last seven weeks. We safely completed all our underway training and executed our mission with the usual excellence I have come to expect from this crew. You should all be proud of the way our sailors go about their job. Their hard work and positive attitude encourages me daily. Without a doubt, I can proudly say that we

have the best cutter and crew in the fleet. It was tough to be away from our families during Thanksgiving, but we all persevered...a port call and 18 holes in Aruba eased the pain a bit! We came extremely close to getting extended for a case, but we were eventually released and are on our way home in time for the holidays. (Continued on page 5)

VIGILANT transfers seized drugs to the CGC TAMPA



SAILOR OF THE YEAR

Every three months, we recognize one of our shipmates for their hard work, positive attitude, and adherence to our Core Values of Honor, Respect, and Devotion to Duty. The crew nominates deserving shipmates and the Chief’s Mess votes to award the Sailor of the Quarter. From the four winners, we then select our Sailor of the Year. This year, BM1 Chris Hoschak was VIGILANT’s

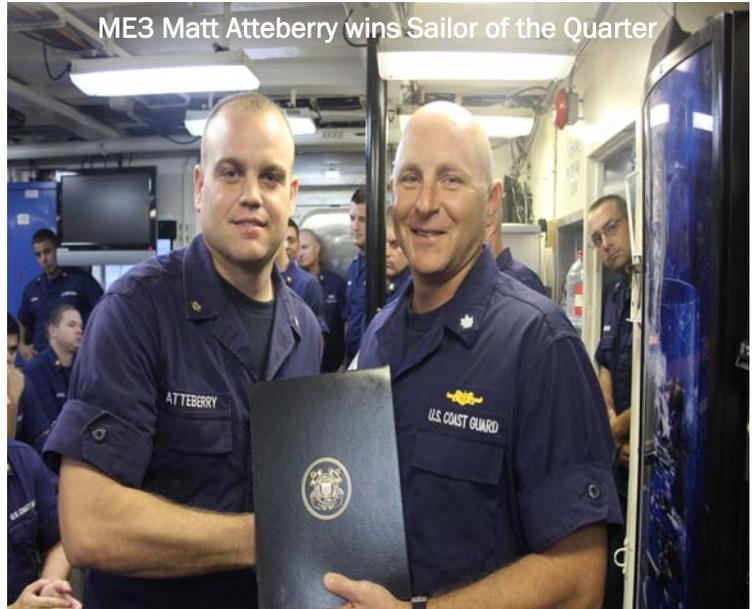
Sailor of the Year. His contributions to VIGILANT and devotion to his shipmates are extremely noteworthy. As our Non-Compliant Vessel Pursuit Coxswain, Chris stopped two “go-fasts” carrying illegal drugs that totaled 100 pounds of cocaine and 1,200 pounds of marijuana. He has led over 30 non-rates as the Leading Petty Officer in Deck Department and has been extremely involved in their

personal and professional development. He was also a key component during the safe interdiction and repatriation of 189 Haitian migrants and numerous Cuban migrants. He has demonstrated excellent leadership and mentoring skills by taking a number of VIGILANT’s Junior Officers under his wing. He has also been responsible for training our small boat coxswains and crew members and serves as our

senior Landing Signals Officer where he ensures VIGILANT can safely land helicopters on our flight deck—easily the most dangerous thing we do. His influence is felt everywhere. Chris will now compete for District Seven Enlisted Person of the Year. We wish him luck and thank him for setting an outstanding example. Chris, his wife Leslie, and son Zander leave us this summer for a job at the Law Enforcement Academy in Charleston, SC. Well done Boats!



BM1 Chris Hoschak receives Sailor of the Year



ME3 Matt Atteberry wins Sailor of the Quarter

SAILOR OF THE QUARTER

Our most recent Sailor of the Quarter is Maritime Enforcement Specialist Third Class Matthew Atteberry. VIGILANT recognized Matt for his outstanding performance and leadership during the 01 July–30 September period. His hard work and positive attitude have been instrumental to VIGILANT’s Law Enforcement program. On his own free time

he selflessly assisted many of his shipmates with qualifications as Boarding Officer or Boarding Team Member. During the July-Sept patrol, he tirelessly stood watch as Junior Officer of the Deck, Helo Tiedown crew, and migrant security watchstander. He was a key member of the boarding team during the disruption of 1,000 lbs of illicit drugs.

Matt often goes above and beyond the call of duty. Underway, he and the Maritime Enforcement Specialists lead high-intensity fitness workouts for the crew on the flight deck. The workouts help increase our operational readiness and bolster the well-being of the crew. Matt also helps to spiritually lead his shipmates by serving as VIGILANT’s Lay Leader. Without a doubt, he is a trusted leader and

friend who we have all become to rely as we execute our missions at sea. Matt also departs us this summer with his family and newborn on the way. He is still waiting on orders, but wherever he goes will be someone else’s gain and our loss. Well done shipmate!

“Cutterman’s Corner”

The permanent Cutterman’s insignia represents members in the Coast Guard who have a strong desire and dedication to serve their country on a Coast Guard cutter for five or more years. It symbolizes the hard work and devotion to serving the Nation in one of the most dangerous environments—the sea. The gold pin represents Officers, and silver represents Enlisted. Shipmates can earn a “temporary” Cutterman’s pin after six months of sea time. The plaque at Command Operations School reads, “ the pin was instituted in 1974 to provide

recognition for Coast Guard personnel who, in the tradition of professional mariners, have performed duties afloat in keeping with their grade and rate and who have endured the rigors and dangers of sea duty for a substantial period. The design can be divided into three basic areas. Each is representative of a Cutterman’s special qualities. The wheel and the waves represent the heritage of the sea. The five point star represents five years of sea duty and the center, the shield, represents the Coast Guard and its seagoing tradition.”

EMC Cory Claybrook said the pin symbolizes “tradition, selflessness, sacrifice, and a career accomplishment. Being a Cutterman is an honor, not only for me, but the ones who served before me to ensure lives were saved, drugs were seized, and our borders protected.” VIGILANT’s Executive Officer, LCDR Tim Cronin said the pin “is the thing I am most proud of in my Coast Guard career. It signifies that I have endured and sacrificed with my fellow shipmates and my family to serve our Nation at sea. It reminds me to be humble and proud.” The two pins are proudly displayed on the right.



1BC Night

Every patrol, the night before VIGILANT returns home is a special night for the crew. It is one where spirits run high and VIGILANT’s First Class Petty Officers prepare a feast fit for kings. The tradition on VIGILANT is to have a large, creative meal, followed by camaraderie on the fantail by smoking cigars and listening to music with the whole crew. It is a fun and rewarding night for the crew as it represents another successful patrol full of hard work. Most importantly, it represents a safe return to our families and friends ashore. The First Class Petty Officers begin cooking in the afternoon with their famous soft pretzels, which the crew always looks forward to and devours once they come out of the oven. Then, they begin their full-on menu, which two patrols ago consisted of a smorgasbord of gourmet hot dogs made just about every way imaginable. Last patrol, saw grilled hamburgers that would put Bobby Flay to shame. As of this writing, we do not know what the “1BC” have in store for us on Tuesday, but we cannot wait to find out.

THE 1BC MAFIA



“1BC Night” is definitely the most anticipated night for the crew, since it is a time to relax and know that only a night’s sleep and a special sea detail are in the way of being back at home in our own beds. We thank the First Class Petty Officers for putting forth an above average and humorous effort to remind us that going to sea and serving alongside each other is an experience we will never forget. As you can tell by the pictures to the left, whatever else happens during 1BC night probably needs to stay within the lifelines of the ship—sorry!

1BC = First Class Booster Club
Pictured (from left to right): BM1 Chris Hoschak, YN1 Matt Falor, FS1 Mason Amos, OS1 Chris Cruz, and GM1 John Stillwell.

INSIDE THE ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT

BY ENS MIKE RATHBUN

Despite a rigorous and cumbersome inport schedule filled with the usual amount of maintenance and training, the engineering department also completed a complete overhaul of the #2 (Left) Main Diesel Engine. Their excellent work ethic and skills were overshadowed by the mysterious clanking of a poorly manufactured cylinder. After four days of what is best described as “Parts Jenga”, they solved the puzzle and made the necessary repairs. As usual, once VIGILANT left Canaveral, the work did not stop. With an upcoming Command Assessment of Readiness and Training (CART) and Tailored Shipboard Training Availability (TSTA), there was a lot to accomplish. The underway work days were packed full with maintenance, training, and standing the watch. As most divisions were just hitting their stride and preparing for a relaxing port call in Aruba, the #2 MDE had other ideas. Once moored up, we were greeted by a large pile of crates. After a much appreciated all-hands effort to open up and load the parts (some over 300 pounds each), the engineers did what they do best — put on coveralls and throw down some wrenches. A streamlined effort and positive attitude allowed for the disassembly and installation of seven cylinder heads in less than two days. To no surprise, the engine was back up and running and the engineers received a solid day's worth of liberty in Aruba.

On 10 December, the Captain awarded the Engineers a Coast Guard Meritorious Team Commendation Ribbon for their recent efforts in overhauling the engine. Their work comprised approximately 9,000 man-hours. Well done Shipmates!



MK1 Jeremy McKeage and MK3 Phil Hanaburgh work on one of the main diesel engines



Ensign Mike Rathbun and DC1 Cesar Perez work in the engine room



The Engineering Department receives a Meritorious Team Commendation Ribbon for overhauling a main diesel engine

The Engineering Department comprises four divisions: Main Propulsion Division, Electrical Division, Auxiliary Machinery Division, and Damage Control Division. Here are a just a few of their recent accomplishments.

The **Main Propulsion Division** led the charge during the overhaul and “Parts Jenga, installed flange shielding throughout the engine room, and responded to two major fresh water leaks on the Reverse Osmosis system. A special congrats to MK1 Philip Lamantia on advancement to First Class Petty Officer.

The **Auxiliary Machinery Division** installed new gauges on the A/C system and ensured the crew was always cool, installed flange shielding on the JP-5 system, labeled all hoses and gauges, and safely loaded over 60,000 gallons of diesel fuel.

The **Electrical Division** tracked down and removed dead-end wires, properly labeled every circuit breaker on board, inspected and tagged everything with a power cord, tracked down a ground on the gyro compass, programmed every A/C unit, and replaced a majority of the light bulbs. A special congrats to EM2 Matthew Nicholl on advancement to Second Class Petty Officer.

The **Damage Control Division** continued their role as the unit's welding shop, assisted in the training of the entire crew in firefighting and damage control, and inventoried, inspected, and repaired every piece of casualty control gear on board.

The Engineering Department does an amazing job keeping our 47-year old cutter running like a well-oiled machine.

CAPTAIN'S CHAIR (CONTINUED)

During this patrol we tenaciously searched the ocean for drug runners. We also assisted with migrant interdiction operations in the Florida Straits to protect our nation from the influx of illegal aliens. These two important missions remind us of the necessary and dangerous work we set out to do every two months. In order to perform these two missions our crew must be highly trained and practice often. The VIGILANT always rises to the occasion and our shipmates continuously perform above my expectations. I hope you are as proud of your family member on board VIGILANT as I am of each one of them for their personal and unit achievement. Enjoy the time at home with friends and families during this holiday season.

With Great Appreciation,

CDR Jim Estramonte

Commanding Officer

VIGILANT during a beautiful sunset from the flight deck



POKER, SPADES TOURNAMENT, AND VIGILANT MORALE

The crew play a grueling match of Spades

The crew is always thinking of new ideas or games to pass the time while on patrol. Of course, it is always nice to add some friendly competition to whatever we do. VIGILANT has a long tradition of playing poker underway. This tradition continued this patrol, but a new card game arose this patrol. An intense Spades tournament started this patrol to pass time and increase morale. There were teams of two and they had to play all the other teams on the bracket to determine the winner. As of this writing, the final Spades match has yet to determine the winner, but FS1 Mason Amos took home the coveted title of VIGILANT Poker Champion with IT2 Ken McAbee as runner-up. We look forward to resuming the competitions next patrol.



OS2 David Mooney and the morale committee organized a Casino Night on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving that involved poker, black jack, and craps. The crew enjoyed the night and helped practice their skills for the real casinos in Aruba! Gamers received candy prize and liberty passes for winning on Casino Night. The games were very realistic with felt tables set up and various crewmembers acting as the dealers. ET1 Saul Kosydar, DC2 Nick Michel, and SN Kevin Perkins did a great job as dealers. It was a great night to top off a wonderful Thanksgiving Dinner.

The crew also enjoyed Jeep Safari tours in Aruba and explored underwater bat caves in Bocas del Toro.

Captain poses with the LTJGs after their promotion



SN Stephen Orsillo is promoted to Seaman

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR TEMPORARY SHIPMATES

Special thanks to ME1 Scott Reed and ET3 Raul Marrero for volunteering to sail with us this patrol and fill critical vacancies. Your hard work and positive attitudes greatly contributed to our operational success and readiness. More importantly,

you became trusted and well-respected Shipmates. You are welcome to sail with VIGILANT anytime and we wish you the best of luck in all your future endeavors.

QUALIFICATIONS, AWARDS, AND PROMOTIONS



MK2 Jeremy McKeage is promoted to MK1

- EOW**
- ENS Mike Rathbun
- Officer of the Deck Underway**
- BM2 Colin Burr
- In-Port Officer of the Deck**
- SK1 Carlos Torres
- BMC James Smith
- In-Port EOW**
- DC2 Nick Michel
- Sailor of the Quarter**
- ME3 Matthew Atteberry
- Sailor of the Year**
- BM1 Chris Hoschak
- ENS to LTJG**
- LTJG Dan Swaim
- LTJG Joseph Drenzo
- LTJG Brian Koch
- LTJG Chris Gardner
- LTJG Tony Garofalo
- E-5 to E-6**
- MK1 Jeremy McKeage
- MK1 Philip Lamantia
- E-4 to E-5**
- EM2 Matthew Nicholl
- E-2 to E-3**
- SN Stephen Orsillo
- Basic Damage Control**
- MK1 Jeremy McKeage
- FN Brandon Blyden
- FN Roman Garcia
- Helm/Lookout**
- SN Casey Binkley
- SN Andrew Thompson
- SN Jared Trivette

- Advanced Damage Control**
- IT2 Kenneth Mcabee
- HS2 Tim Sutherland
- ET1 Saul Kosydar
- MK1 Jeremy McKeage
- SN Casey Binkley
- SN Eric Gordon
- SN Gabriel Lassus-Ramirez
- SN Stephen Orsillo
- Boat Crew**
- BM3 Warren Gardner
- SN Anthony Green
- BM2 Jonathan Johnson
- ME3 Matthew Atteberry

- Auxiliary Watch Stander**
- MK1 Jeremy McKeage
- SN Roman Garcia
- FN Christian Barnes
- Throttleman**
- MK1 Jeremy Mckeage
- Boarding Team Member**
- FN Justin Glazier
- MK3 Philip Hanaburgh
- GPOW**
- FN Roman Garcia
- SN Casey Binkley

- JOOD**
- LTJG Tony Garofalo
- SN Marcus Thompson
- Force Protection Officer**
- ME2 Kyle Walker
- ME3 Matthew Atteberry
- ENS Kevin Curry
- Combat Watch Officer**
- ME1 Scott Reed
- Boatswain Mate of the Watch**
- SN Daniel Nieves

Crew Volleyball Tournament in Barbados



The Engineers repair the #2 Main Diesel Engine



SN Kevin Perkins, ME2 Kyle Walker, BM2 John Johnson, and FN Justin Glazier prepare to transfer illegal drugs



Shipmates experience a jeep safari tour in Aruba



The boat crew transports Cuban migrants to VIGILANT



BM2 Colin Burr assumes his first Underway Officer of the Deck Watch

