



## WINDWARD PASS PATROL 2016

*GREETINGS FROM THE CABIN...*  
COMMANDING OFFICER—CDR RILEY GATEWOOD

### INSIDE THIS EDITION

- +MIGRANT INTERDICTION OPERATIONS
- +WINDWARD PASSAGE & CANAL DE LA TORTUE
- +HEROISM IN ACTION
- +HELO STAN
- +DAMAGE CONTROL OYLYMPICS
- +GUNNERY EXERCISE
- +QUALIFICATION AND ADVANCEMENTS
- +LIFE UNDERWAY

VIGILANT departed Port Canaveral on July 23rd to patrol the Windward Passage located between Haiti and Cuba. To get there, we had to patrol through the often-busy Straits of Florida where our primary duty is to rescue and recover Cuban migrants attempting to make U.S. landfall. VIGILANT provided eighteen days of mission support to Sector Key West and processed 433 Cuban migrants. The crew enjoyed familiar patrol breaks in Key West, Florida and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, before returning home to Cape Canaveral. This patrol followed a significant personnel transfer season; and marks the



first major deployment for many onboard. In addition to this being a busy and rewarding patrol, there were lots of earned qualifications for all watch stations. Congratulations to you all. To our departing shipmates: thank you for the time and effort you put into VIGILANT. You trained your reliefs to the high standard we hold, and ensured no gaps will be left upon your departure. The sacrifices you and your families made for this ship are greatly appreciated and I wish you fair winds and following seas for the journey ahead of you.



## MIGRANT INTERDICTION OPERATIONS

VIGILANT was charged with patrolling the Straits of Florida to detect and interdict undocumented migrants at sea. The Straits of Florida is an enormous area to cover with a relatively short-distance threat vector. Once recovered, we provide food, water, shelter and medical care until they repatriated back to Cuba. Many of migrants suffered from seasickness and dehydration and one was unconscious. That migrant received immediate medical attention and quickly recovered. Due to VIGILANT size, we served as the main holding platform for more than 400 migrants interdicted. Many times, the stolen or home-made vessels that migrants set sail in are unlit, unsafe, and unfit for sea. As a means of protecting the public, VIGILANT destroys these vessels, which are considered hazards to navigation. VIGILANT had the privilege of working side-by-side with several of the Coast Guard's newest patrol boats. The crew remained energetic and positive while working tirelessly to keep the U.S. border secure.



## WINDWARD PASSAGE & CANAL DE LA TORTUE TRANSIT

While in the Windward Passage, VIGILANT's primary mission of migrant interdiction continued, this time, along the North coast of Haiti. The navigation team made a series of patrols through Canal De La Tortue, a widely used waterway between northern Haiti and Isle De La Tortue. Haitians often begin their journey by transiting from Haiti through the canal, heading north for the United States while using the Bahamian islands as cover. Skillfully zigzagging through the maze of small sailing vessels (also called Nachos because of their appearance), VIGILANT successfully completed eleven 3-hour transits through the canal.



## HEROISM IN ACTION: FOUR CREW MEMBERS WORK TOGETHER TO SAVE THE LIFE OF A CUBAN MIGRANT

Early on the morning of 04 August, three migrant security watchstanders, Petty Officer Flores, Petty Officer Lejuez, and Petty Officer Floyd discovered a Cuban migrant under his blanket, in a pool of his own blood and unresponsive. The watchstanders quickly called for assistance. Petty Officer Smith, the ship's corpsman, along with Petty Officer Delgado, Petty Officer Gilkerson, and Seaman Levin, rushed to the scene. Petty Officer SMITH immediately recognized the life threatening situation as the migrant had lost several liters of blood. Working on an open flight deck with only flashlights for illumination, the team rapidly assessed that the patient had a pulse and was breathing. Petty Officer Smith bandaged the wound and applied direct pressure while the other members prepared an IV and oxygen. The migrant regained consciousness after several minutes. The quick action of these four crewmembers saved the man's life and prevented a medical evacuation from occurring. Petty Officer Smith was awarded the Coast Guard Achievement Medal and Petty Officer Gilkerson, Petty Officer Delgado, and SN Levin were awarded the Commandant's Letter of Commendation for their roles in saving the man's life.



## SHIPBOARD HELICOPTER STANDARDIZATION TRAINING

One of the most vital assets to VIGILANT and all flight deck equipped cutters across the fleet is the ability to launch and recover helicopters. Shipboard helicopter operations greatly augment our efforts in search and rescue, the war on drugs, migrant interdiction, and vastly expands the Coast Guard's ability to patrol and protect waters deep off shore. Every 18 months, cutters must recertify their ability to launch and recover helicopters. VIGILANT underwent the meticulous evaluation process of recertification during this patrol. Every piece of flight gear is thoroughly inspected and exams are administered to ensure proficiency. Additionally, complex evolutions such as helicopter in-flight refueling, vertical replenishment, and a simulated helicopter crash on deck drill are conducted. VIGILANT's crew passed the recertification process with flying colors and completed more than 44 evolutions with total success.



## DAMAGE CONTROL OLYMPICS

A vessel at sea is constantly exposed to the hazards of fire and flooding. Should we experience such a casualty aboard VIGILANT there is no escape. It is up to each and every crewmember to fight as a team to save the ship. The crew runs damage control drills on a daily basis.

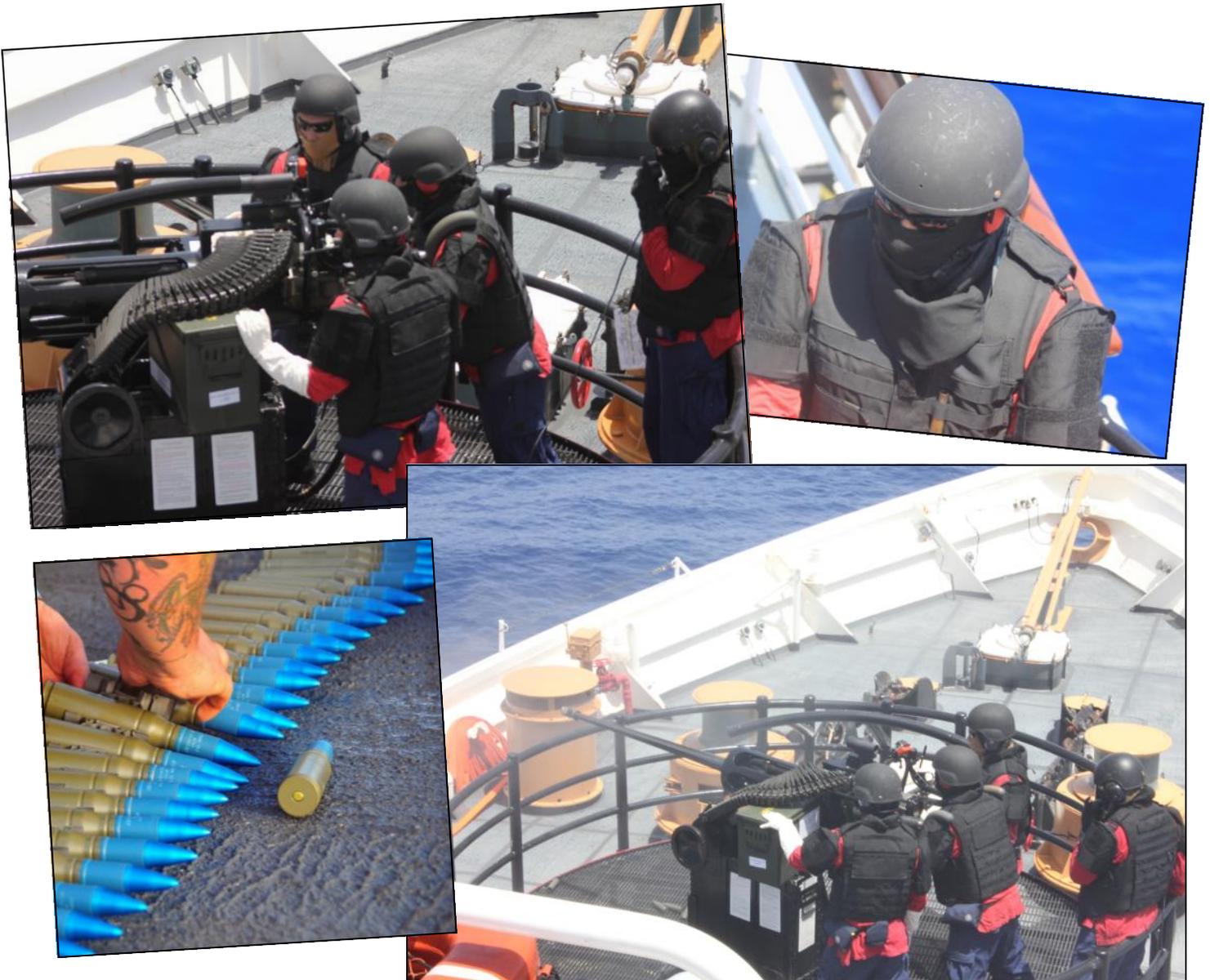
In an effort to break up the monotony of running drills daily, our Damage Control Assistant, ENS Megan Daniels, organized an afternoon of competition and training amongst the crew; a Damage Control Olympics! The crew was divided into six teams and each team traversed a series of seven different simulated casualties including fire hose handling, ruptured pipe patching, donning personal protective equipment as fast as possible, and treating wounds on injured crew members.

The DC Olympics was an exciting afternoon filled with competition, laughter, and most importantly, great training. It was a huge success and a welcome change of pace for the crew. The winning team consisted of ENS Dumont, ENS Maurer, ENS Rizzo, ET2 Harris, GM3 Rodriguez, SN Rivera, and SN Demers. Congratulations!



## GUNNERY EXERCISES

One of the most exciting exercises VIGILANT conducts underway is a GUNNEX, or Gunnery Exercise. General Quarters is sounded onboard, and the entire crew rushes to their battle stations to simulate preparations for an imminent attack on the ship. Gun Crews man and load two .50cal machine guns on each side of the bridge and the MK38 Mod 1 25mm gun on the forecastle. Locked on to a deployed smoke float, the gun crews practice warning shots, disabling fire, and destructive fire. During this patrol, VIGILANT used two abandoned vessels that were deemed hazards to navigation as targets for the gun crews. Each vessel was successfully sunk by the .50cal gun crews; over 2,500 rounds of ammo was expended between the GUNNEX and the sunk vessels.



# UNDERWAY LIFE



## QUALIFICATIONS

### **Underway Officer of the Deck**

ENS Ross

BM1 Poklemba

### **Underway Engineer of the Watch**

ENS Markham

### **Inport Officer of the Deck**

ENS Vanstraten

### **Inport Engineer of the Watch**

ENS Markham

EMC Urena

DC1 Ferguson

### **Helm and Lookout**

SN Cadet Ramirez

SN Guerra

SN Vanvleck

### **Coast Guard Achievement Medal**

HS1 Smith

### **Commandant's Letter of Commendation**

FS2 Gilkerson

EM3 Delgado

SN Levin

### **Advancements:**

HS1 Smith, SN Demers, SN Ramirez, and  
FN Watkins

### **Quarter Master of the Watch**

ENS Dumont

ENS Maurer

ENS Rizzo

BM1 Shumpert

ME1 Moss

### **Combat Information Center Watchstander**

ENS Dumont

ENS Maurer

ENS Rizzo

OS1 Blanchard

OS3 Watkins

### **Engine Room Throttleman**

DC2 Palm

### **Engine Room Auxiliary Watchstander**

MK1 Blaney

MK3 Lejuez

MK3 Messick

EM3 Delgado

FN Dedecker

FN Epstein

### **Permanent Cuttermans Pin**

EM2 Roux

ET2 Harris

