

Coast Guard Cutter Valiant returns home after 49-day deployment in the Florida Straits and Windward Passage



(U.S. Coast Guard courtesy photo)

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NAVAL STATION MAYPORT, Fla. – Coast Guard Cutter Valiant (WMEC 621) and its crew returned to their homeport at Naval Station Mayport, June 28, following a 49-day migrant interdiction operations patrol in the Florida Straits and Windward Passage.

Valiant's crew deployed in support of Homeland Security Task Force – Southeast (HSTF-SE) and Operation Vigilant Sentry (OVS) while underway in the Seventh Coast Guard District's area of operations. Throughout the patrol, the crew of Valiant conducted maritime safety and security missions to protect life at sea and enforce U.S. maritime law.

While at sea in the Florida Straits, crew members rescued eight Cuban migrants from a makeshift vessel that was transiting northward toward the Florida Keys, attempting to reach the United States unlawfully by sea.

Valiant's crew also patrolled off coastal Haiti to deter illegal and dangerous maritime migration from the region. While underway in the Windward Passage, Valiant's crew interdicted two unsafe migrant vessels north of Haiti. These interdictions resulted in the collective rescue of 197 Haitian migrants who were adrift at sea, including three Haitian migrants who were retrieved from the water by crew members after they had fallen overboard due to their vessel being

grossly overloaded.

While on patrol near Dominican Republic waters, Valiant located a 20-foot wooden vessel with no lights or safety equipment and 15 migrants on board. After intercepting the vessel, Valiant's crew transferred the migrants to a Dominican Republic Navy vessel for repatriation to their country of origin. This action led to the successful rescue of the migrants and reinforced the U.S. Coast Guard's continued ability to interoperate with our partner nations in the region.

"This patrol was extremely busy, and the crew is proud that we were able to save over 200 people in unseaworthy vessels," said Ensign John Vaaler, a law enforcement officer aboard Valiant. "The vessels we interdicted were not carrying essential lifesaving equipment adequate for the many people on board. I am very glad we found them when we did, or people may have been lost at sea."

Later in the patrol, Valiant intercepted a go-fast, drug-smuggling vessel in the Windward Passage. This action disrupted the vessel's voyage and forced the suspected drug traffickers to jettison their contraband to the sea, preventing harmful narcotics from reaching American shores.

Valiant is a multi-mission 210-foot, Reliance-class medium-endurance cutter. Its primary missions include search and rescue, maritime law enforcement, marine environmental protection, homeland security and national defense operations.

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