

Coast Guard Cutter Valiant Returns to Jacksonville After 60-Day Patrol



The Coast Guard Cutter Valiant conducting flight operations with Air Station Miami MH-65 Dolphin Helicopter in order to qualify flight deck team members mid-May 2020, in the Caribbean. U.S. COAST GUARD

JACKSONVILLE – The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Valiant (WMEC-621) returned home to Naval Station Mayport, Florida, June 22, after completing a nine-week patrol conducting operations in the Windward Passage between Haiti and Cuba in support of Coast Guard 7th District and Operation Southeast Watch, the 7th District said in a release.

Coast Guard Cutter Valiant patrolled over 11,000 nautical miles in the Caribbean, working closely with the Navy and Coast Guard cutters Diligence (WMEC-616), Resolute (WMEC-620), Kathleen Moore (WPC-1109), William Trump (WPC-1111) and Raymond Evans (WPC-1110).

Valiant increased Coast Guard presence along the northern coasts of Haiti, Dominican Republic, Cuba and the Windward Passage, working to prevent an anticipated surge of illegal immigration and human smuggling amid the COVID-19 global pandemic. Throughout this patrol, Valiant served as the Cutter Tasking Unit, directing all Coast Guard assets supporting Operation Southeast Watch in the Windward Passage. In order to deter an illegal exodus from Haiti, Valiant maintained an overt presence by frequently transiting the Canal de la Tortue, a heavily trafficked, deepwater passage between the Tortuga Island and the Northern Haitian coastline.

Early in the patrol, Valiant conducted vital training with two MH-65 Dolphin helicopters from Air Station Miami. The first

evolution involved a vertical replenishment between the cutter and an airborne helicopter and aided in the qualification of Valiant's flight deck crew as well as two pilots for shipboard operations in preparation for hurricane season. The second evolution included multiple day and night touch and go landings, as well as a helicopter in-flight refueling, ultimately leading to the qualification of numerous crew members.

Valiant unloaded nearly 14,000 pounds of cocaine and marijuana and nine detained suspected drug smugglers during the patrol. The contraband and detainees were seized by multiple Coast Guard and Navy assets and transferred to other Coast Guard cutters for future disposition stateside.

Valiant also assisted in the transfer of a Coast Guard 45-foot Response Boat-Medium (RB-M) from Coast Guard Sector Miami to Coast Guard Sector San Juan. The Valiant crew took on the tow of the RB-M from Coast Guard Cutter Diligence in the Windward Passage and towed the vessel the remaining 360 nautical miles to Sector San Juan, saving the Coast Guard over \$100,000 in shipping costs.

"Valiant's crew has a unique ability to be at their best in the most challenging of times, and this patrol was no exception," said Cmdr. Matthew Waldron, Valiant's commanding officer. "Demonstrating exceptional fortitude, they adapted and overcame all challenges associated with the worldwide pandemic to safely conduct a two-month patrol in the Windward Passage. Using overt presence to deter migrant departures from Haiti, we prevented attempts of dangerous and illegal maritime voyages to the Bahamas and Florida. The crew's efforts proved highly effective, as migrant departures from Haiti were kept well below historic norms during this period, allowing first responders in the U.S. and the Bahamas to focus on pandemic response efforts."

The Valiant is a multimission 210-foot medium-endurance

cutter. Missions include search and rescue, maritime law enforcement, marine environmental protection, homeland security. and national defense operations.