

Cutter Willow Services Aids to Navigation in Puerto Rico Maritime Ports



Coast Guard Cutter Willow prepares to enter the Port of San Juan, Puerto Rico May 8, 2021. The Willow completed a 12-day mission May 19, 2021, servicing 23 critical aids to navigation (AToN) across eight of the island's maritime ports in San Juan, Mayaguez, Tallaboa, Ponce, Guanica Ceiba, Culebra and the southwest pass of Vieques. *U.S. COAST GUARD*

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – The Coast Guard Cutter Willow has completed a 12-day mission servicing 23 critical aids to navigation (AToN) across eight maritime ports in Puerto Rico, the Coast Guard 7th District said in a release.

The crew of the cutter Willow serviced AToN in the ports of San Juan, Mayaguez, Tallaboa, Ponce, Guanica, Ceiba, Culebra and in the southwest pass of Vieques, Puerto Rico.

“After 15 months of multiple major maintenance periods and COVID restrictions, the Coast Guard Cutter Willow is excited to be back in Puerto Rico,” said Cmdr. Margaret Kennedy, Coast Guard Cutter Willow commanding officer. “It’s dirty but satisfying work, which makes the waterways safe for commercial and recreational marine traffic and helps facilitate the flow of maritime commerce to and from the island. Our ship and crew still have a lot of work to do, and we look forward to returning to the Sector San Juan area later this summer to complete it.”

As the only heavy lift asset within the Coast Guard's Seventh District, cutter Willow is primarily responsible for the continuous operation of 245 fixed and floating aids to navigation spanning from the U.S Virgin Islands to South Carolina and relies on a crew of 48 personnel to complete this

and other Coast Guard missions.

The servicing of these maritime resources requires a systematic process that often places the cutter in hazardous waters while the crew works to lift the aid, steel chain, and concrete sinker out of the water to replace components of the buoy and mooring on deck.

This occurs up to six times a day and requires a team effort by all hands onboard to complete the task. Once set back in the water, the aid is precisely placed using GPS coordinates that best mark the waterway for the mariner to reference.

The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Willow (WLB 202) is a 225-foot sea going buoy tender homeported in Charleston, South Carolina.