

USS Billings Returns Home After U.S. 4th Fleet Deployment



The Freedom-variant littoral combat ship USS Billings (LCS 15) transits the Caribbean Sea, July 10, 2021. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Austin G. Collins*

MAYPORT, Fla. – The Freedom-variant littoral combat ship USS Billings (LCS 15) returned to Mayport, Florida, Oct. 30, following its successful first deployment to the U.S. 4th Fleet area of operations, said U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet Public Affairs.

Billings (Gold crew), along with the “Snowmen” of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 28, Detachment 5, deployed June 30, to conduct U.S. Southern Command and Joint Interagency Task Force South’s counter-narcotics operations in the Caribbean Sea.

During their deployment, Billings, with its embarked U.S. Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment (LEDET), assisted in disrupting an estimated 1,597 kilograms of cocaine worth over an estimated street value of over \$111.8 million and removed 13 suspected drug traffickers from the narcotics trade.

When a 7.2-magnitude earthquake struck Haiti Aug. 14, 2021, Billings joined in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) efforts as part of the Joint Force Maritime Component Command. Billings provided support as an afloat refueling base for Joint Task Force-Haiti aircraft and utilized its MH-60S Sea Hawk from HSC-28 to move personnel and transport life-saving aid to remote areas in need.

“I am incredibly proud of the Sailors on Billings for everything they accomplished this deployment,” said Cmdr. Brett Seeley, commanding officer aboard Billings. “The incredible work ethic, professionalism, and resiliency of this team was crucial in conducting real world operations. Taking narcotics off the streets, easing suffering of the people of Haiti through HADR, and building partnerships in this part of the world has had tangible impacts and sets the stage for those who sail after us. I could not have asked for a better maiden deployment for our mighty warship and the Thundercat crew.”

Billings conducted three bilateral maritime exercises with Jamaica and the Dominican Republic to strengthen partnerships and build interoperability between forces.

During a port visit to Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, the ship hosted a reception onboard, welcoming Dominican Republic President Luis Rodolfo Abinader, Vice President Raquel Peña and Chargé d’Affaires of U.S. Embassy Santo Domingo Robert W. Thomas.

Upon arriving in U.S. 4th Fleet area of operations, Billings also participated in a surface training exercise with USS Sioux City (LCS 11) and USS Wichita (LCS 13), marking the first time three Freedom-variant LCS ships have been deployed and operating together at the same time.

Throughout the deployment, Billings partnered with other U.S. Navy warships, as well as numerous U.S. agencies from the departments of Defense, Justice and Homeland Security, in the effort to combat transnational organized crime.