

# USS Cole Relieves USS Gravelly, Assumes Southern Border Mission



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MAYPORT, Fla. – The Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer USS Cole (DDG 67) departed Naval Station Mayport, Florida, to support U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) southern border operations, June 5.

Cole takes over duties previously carried out by the Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer USS Gravelly (DDG 107) and will conduct similar operations in support of USNORTHCOM's border security objectives.

USNORTHCOM is working together with the Department of Homeland Security to provide additional military forces and

capabilities at the southern border.

The Cole, homeported in Norfolk, Va., will deploy under U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. Fourth Fleet. The deployment aims to enhance maritime security and support interagency collaboration in the region through presence operations and the support of an embarked U.S. Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment (LEDET).

Since entering the Gulf of America on March 15, Gravely has received support from P-8 aircrafts assigned to Naval Air Station Jacksonville, Florida, allowing for enhanced and increased identification of illicit activity for the embarked Coast Guard LEDET in the Gulf of America. Along with the embarked USCG LEDET, the "Swamp Foxes" of Helicopter Maritime Squadron (HSM) 74, MH-60R Sea Hawk helicopters, is the attached helicopter detachment.

"USS Gravely remains at the forefront of maritime operations, ready to take on any challenge," said Cmdr. Gregory Piorun, commanding officer, USS Gravely. "We will continue to stand strong, protect vital waters, and ensure that justice prevails. True to our motto, we remain always, 'First to Conquer'."

On May 25, Gravely seized an estimated 860 pounds of illegal drugs from a vessel in the Caribbean Sea. The interdiction by Gravely was conducted by the ship's Visit, Board, Search and Seizure (VBSS) team alongside a LEDET assigned to the ship. The VBSS team boarded a vessel of interest and discovered and seized 19 bales of cocaine, with an approximate weight of 860 pounds and an estimated value of \$13,650,000.

"This operation supports the administration's focus on integrated homeland defense and maritime border security," said Capt. Raymond Jackson, commanding officer, Coast Guard Tactical Law Enforcement Team South. "By uniting Coast Guard

law enforcement expertise with Navy reach and surveillance, we're enhancing deterrence, increasing domain awareness and reinforcing our commitment to protecting the homeland."

The U.S. Coast Guard LEDET has unique legal authority to conduct U.S. law enforcement operations in support of border security missions under U.S. Northern Command. Utilizing the Coast Guard's jurisdiction, the Cole will employ LEDET personnel to perform vessel boardings, searches, and seizures in U.S. and international waters, targeting drug trafficking, illegal immigration, and transnational crime with a nexus to the U.S. southern border. With LEDET's tactical expertise guiding interdiction efforts, the Cole will harness its advanced surveillance systems and mobility to locate and intercept suspect vessels, effectively extending Coast Guard authority through naval power to enhance maritime security operations. This collaboration ensures a robust, legally empowered response to maritime threats, strengthening U.S. border protection efforts.

U.S. 2nd Fleet, reestablished in 2018 in response to the changing global security environment, develops and employs maritime forces ready to fight across multiple domains in the Atlantic and Arctic in order to ensure access, deter aggression and defend U.S., allied, and partner interests.

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U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet serves as a trusted maritime partner for Caribbean, Central and South American maritime forces and promotes unity, security, and stability in the region.

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