

# 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.

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## USCGC Hamilton Concludes Operations with U.S. Navy 6th Fleet



The Legend-class national security cutter USCGC Hamilton (WMSL 753) arrives in Valletta, Malta for a port visit May 17, 2021. Hamilton is in Valletta following at-sea engagements with the armed forces of Malta in the Mediterranean Sea. *U.S. COAST GUARD*

MEDITERRANEAN SEA – The Legend-class national security USCGC Hamilton (WMSL 753) transited out of the Mediterranean Sea, concluding the crew's recent operations in the U.S. Navy 6th Fleet's area of responsibility, May 24, 2021, the Coast Guard Atlantic Area said in a May 25 release.

Hamilton entered the Mediterranean Sea on April 15 and the

Black Sea on April 27 to support NATO Allies and partners. Hamilton was the first U.S. Coast Guard Cutter to visit the Black Sea since 2008. The last U.S. Coast Guard cutter to visit the Black Sea was USCGC Dallas (WHEC 716) and sailed to the Black Sea twice, in 2008 and 1995.

Since leaving the Black Sea on May 14, Hamilton's crew visited Valletta, Malta, and conducted engagements at sea with the armed forces of Malta. They also conducted a brief logistics stop in Rota, Spain, on May 23.

"By operating with 6th Fleet, we expand the Coast Guard's global reach and advance our Nation's Tri-Service Maritime Strategy," said Capt. Timothy Cronin, commanding officer of USCGC Hamilton (WMSL 753). "This deployment also reinforced our commitment to freedom of navigation in international waters while building capacity and partnerships with nations that have shared interests and threats in the maritime domain."

After departing North Charleston, South Carolina, on Feb. 28, the crew of Hamilton stopped in Puerto Rico and then headed toward Rota, with two Sentinel-class fast response cutters, USCGC Charles Moulthrop (WPC 1141) and USCGC Robert Goldman (WPC 1142). After escorting the fast response cutters and departing Spain, Hamilton then visited Italy, Georgia, Ukraine and Malta. The crew conducted various operational exercises with the maritime components of each country and Turkey, Romania and Bulgaria.

"The relationships we build are fundamental for establishing maritime safety and security worldwide," said Lt. Cmdr. Taylor Kellogg, operations officer of USCGC Hamilton. "Working together with our NATO allies and partners, we advance the rule of law on the sea, ensuring free and open access to the maritime domain."

The U.S. Navy and U.S. Coast Guard operate forward, from the

littoral to the open ocean, ensuring stability and open sea lanes across all maritime domains. U.S. Coast Guard operations in U.S. 6th Fleet demonstrate the service's commitment, flexibility, and capability to operate and address security concerns throughout Europe and Africa.

The U.S. Coast Guard is conducting a routine deployment in U.S. Navy 6th Fleet, working alongside allies, building maritime domain awareness and sharing best practices with partner nation navies and coast guards.

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## U.S. Coast Guard Establishes UxS Cross Functional Working Group



Technicians recover a ScanEagle small unmanned aerial system (SUAS) drone aboard USCGC Stratton (WMSL 752) in the Pacific, in 2019. *U.S. COAST GUARD / Chief Petty Officer Sara Muir*

A report from the National Academies of Sciences has recommended the U.S. Coast Guard “take a more strategic and accelerated approach to exploit the capabilities of existing and future unmanned systems,” and the Coast Guard agrees.

The report, “Leveraging Unmanned Systems for Coast Guard Missions,” has called on the Coast Guard to engage more with unmanned systems (UxS) and the capabilities they bring to Coast Guard missions. The report acknowledges the service is currently investigating how to use UxS for its 11 statutory mission areas and to introduce their capabilities into the fleet and force structure.

“As other military services and other operational agencies of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) integrate UxSs into their force structures, the Coast Guard will be impelled to do the same, because it engages in joint and combined operations and missions with these partners,” the document said. “Abundant evidence in this report points to both a compelling need and burgeoning opportunities for the Coast Guard to proceed more aggressively, albeit strategically and deliberately, in leveraging UxS advancements. Indeed, the study committee concludes that to remain responsive and fully relevant to its many missions, it is imperative that the Coast Guard take a more strategic and accelerated approach to exploit the capabilities of existing and future unmanned systems.”

In fact, the report’s authors were “struck by the magnitude and breadth of opportunity that lies ahead for the Coast Guard to pursue UxSs across its multiple operational domains and missions.” However, the report said “those initiatives have been characterized by limited funding spread over many years and the absence of a formal means, or a pacing mechanism, for proactively identifying, investigating, and integrating promising systems.”

The report found that, although the Coast Guard has multiple ongoing UxS initiatives, an opportunity for improvement exists by developing a formal means for identifying, investigating, and integrating promising systems. The report recommended the creation of a high-level UxS strategy.

The service has taken that advice seriously, and responded enthusiastically by establishing an Unmanned Systems Cross Functional Working Group on Dec. 21, 2020, to create a strategic vision for leveraging UxS across Coast Guard missions.

In his 2021 State of the Coast Guard address, Commandant of the Coast Guard Adm. Karl Schultz said the key to spotlighting

bad behavior is maritime domain awareness.

“Last fall, our Research and Development Center tested the ability of unmanned surface vessels to augment traditional ship and aviation capabilities for operations in the far reaches of the Pacific Ocean. We learned that the future of our unmanned systems strategy will most likely rely on more diverse systems and effective integration of machine-learning to unlock actionable data for Coast Guard operators,” he said. “These are valuable lessons as we stand up an unmanned system element within our Coast Guard Requirements Shop to consider how unmanned technology can augment our future fleet.”

The UxS Cross Functional Working Group is currently developing the Coast Guard’s strategy for UxS. By leveraging and adapting these technologies, the service envisions achieving increased efficiencies, enhanced personnel safety, and improved mission performance across Coast Guard operations.

The Coast Guard Research and Development Center and the Department of Homeland Security’s Office of Science and Technology, through partnerships with the Department of Defense, have been evaluating UxS technologies for several years.

“These research-focused initiatives complement the service’s requirements generation and evaluation, industry engagement, and robust acquisitions processes to ensure multi-mission operational requirements are met by the best-suited capability, including manned, unmanned, and hybrid solutions,” said a Coast Guard spokesperson. “The UxS Working Group is responsible for aligning strategic efforts ranging from the identification and evaluation of emerging technologies to their operational deployment and related doctrine.”

According to Lisa Kirkpatrick, Deputy Assistant Commandant for Capability (CG-7D, the cross-programmatic working group), under the direction of the Assistant Commandant for Capability

(CG-7), is comprised of subject matter experts from across the Coast Guard including representatives from the Coast Guard Coast Guard Research, Development, Test & Evaluation and Innovation Program, the Office of Aviation Forces' Unmanned Aircraft Systems Division, the Office of Requirements and Analysis, the Office of Shore Forces, the Office of Cybersecurity Program Management, and the Directorate for Response Policy.

"The UxS Working Group follows a proven integrated product and process development approach, and will directly inform the service's next steps to incorporate unmanned systems to increase safety and enhance mission effectiveness across Coast Guard operations," Haring said.

The Working Group's accomplishments and lessons learned will inform the potential establishment of a permanent UxS office, and help apply a holistic approach towards UxS across the range of Coast Guard multi-mission operations.

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## U.S. Coast Guard Academy Graduates 240 New Officers



President Joseph R. Biden Jr. delivered the keynote address at the Coast Guard Academy during the 140th Commencement Exercises May 19, 2021. The Coast Guard Academy graduated 240 new officers along with seven international students. *U.S. COAST GUARD / Petty Officer 3rd Class Matthew Thieme*

NEW LONDON, Conn. – The U.S. Coast Guard Academy graduated 240 new officers along with seven international students with keynote speaker President Joseph R. Biden Jr. in attendance, May 19, 2021, the academy said.

The Class of 2021 consists of 34 percent women and 34 percent from underrepresented minority groups.

The class includes 22 African Americans who walked the stage, which marks the largest number of African American graduates to do so in academy history. This year also marked the second highest number of Asian American and Pacific Islanders in a single graduating class.

Next month, the new officers will begin to serve as leaders in a variety of operational roles throughout the Coast Guard, mostly in cutters.

Seven graduating international cadets from the countries of the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Georgia and will serve in their respective countries of origin.

“The Class of 2021 has led the corps during a very challenging time,” said Academy Superintendent Rear Adm. Bill Kelly. “I am confident they are fully prepared to graduate and serve our nation as officers in the U.S. Coast Guard.”

Founded in 1876, the Coast Guard Academy is one of the five U.S. service academies and is ranked among the nation’s most prestigious and selective institutions of higher learning. For more information, visit [www.uscga.edu](http://www.uscga.edu).

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## Cutter Offloads \$220 Million in Interdicted Illicit Drugs in San Diego



Rear Adm. Brian Penoyer, the Eleventh Coast Guard District



commander; speaks to the crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Active (WMEC 618) during a drug offload in San Diego, Wednesday. The drugs, worth an estimated \$220 million, were seized in international waters of the Eastern Pacific Ocean during April and May. *COAST GUARD / Petty Officer 3rd Class Alex Gray*

SAN DIEGO – The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Active (WMEC 618) offloaded approximately 11,500 pounds of seized cocaine in San Diego, May 19, the Coast Guard 11th District said in a release.

The drugs, worth an estimated \$220 million, were seized in the international waters of the Eastern Pacific Ocean during April and May. They represent four suspected drug smuggling vessel interdictions off the coasts of Mexico, Central, and South America by the following Coast Guard ships:

The Coast Guard Cutter Active (WMEC 618) crew was responsible for two interdictions seizing approximately 5,650 pounds of cocaine.

The Coast Guard Cutter Steadfast (WMEC 623) crew was responsible for one interdiction seizing approximately 2,250 pounds of cocaine.

The Coast Guard Cutter Tahoma (WMEC 908) crew was responsible for one interdiction seizing approximately 3,660 pounds of cocaine.

Speakers at the event included Cmdr. James M. O'Mara IV, Coast Guard Cutter Active commanding officer; Rear Adm. Brian Penoyer, Eleventh Coast Guard District commander; Brandon Tucker, Customs and Border Protection Deputy Director of Air Operations for the San Diego Air and Marine Branch; and Randy Grossman, the acting U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of California.

"This is the end state result of teamwork across multiple inner agencies. This is what we train for; we are manned, trained, and equipped to come down here and do a mission,"

O'Mara said. "The competition of this mission is a testament to this crew's resolve and their persistence to get out there and get it done."

On April 1, U.S. Southern Command increased counter-narcotics operations in the Western Hemisphere to disrupt the flow of drugs. Numerous U.S. agencies from the Departments of Defense, Justice, and Homeland Security cooperated in the effort to combat transnational organized crime. The Coast Guard, Navy, Customs and Border Protection, FBI, Drug Enforcement Administration, and Immigration and Customs Enforcement, along with allied and international partner agencies, play a role in counter-drug operations.

The fight against drug cartels in the Eastern Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea requires unity of effort in all phases from detection, monitoring, and interdictions, to criminal prosecutions for these interdictions by United States Attorney's Offices from the Middle District of Florida, the Southern District of Florida and the Southern District of California. The law enforcement phase of counter-smuggling operations in the Eastern Pacific Ocean is conducted under the authority of the 11th Coast Guard District, headquartered in Alameda. The interdictions, including the actual boardings, are led and conducted by members of the U.S. Coast Guard.

"Seizing 11,500 pounds of cocaine is no small feat. Of the 11,500 pounds you see here, the Active seized 5,600 pounds. And that is quite an accomplishment when you consider that Active and the other ships of her class have been in service for more than 50 years," Penoyer said. "I would like to congratulate Cmdr. O'Mara and the crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Active for their hard work, dedication, and sacrifice."

The Active is a 210-foot medium-endurance cutter, commissioned in 1966 and homeported in Port Angeles, Washington. The Steadfast is a 210-foot medium endurance cutter, commissioned

in 1968 and homeported in Astoria, Oregon. The Tahoma is a 270-foot medium endurance cutter, commissioned in 1988 and homeported in Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

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# Coast Guard Repatriates 66 Migrants to the Dominican Republic



The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Donald Horsley repatriates 66 migrants to a Dominican Republic Navy patrol boat just off Punta Cana, Dominican Republic May 18, 2021, following the interdiction of two illegal voyages in Mona Passage waters off Puerto Rico. The interdictions are the result of ongoing efforts by Caribbean Border Interagency Group partner agencies in their common goal of securing the borders of Puerto Rico against illegal migrant and drug smuggling. *U.S. COAST GUARD* SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – The Coast Guard Cutter Donald Horsley crew repatriated 66 migrants to the Dominican Republic May 18, following the interdiction of two illegal voyages in Mona Passage waters off Puerto Rico.

The interdicted migrants consisted of 55 men and 11 women claiming to be Dominican Republic nationals.

The interdictions are the result of ongoing efforts by Caribbean Border Interagency Group (CBIG) partner agencies to combat illegal migrant smuggling.

The aircrew of a U.S. Customs and Border Protection maritime patrol aircraft detected the first illegal voyage May 17, approximately 47 nautical miles northwest of Aguadilla, Puerto Rico. The Coast Guard Cutter Donald Horsley responded to the

sighting and interdicted the suspect vessel with the assistance of the cutter's small boat. The cutter's crew safely embarked the migrants, 44 men and 10 women, from a grossly overloaded 28-foot makeshift vessel that was riding low and taking on water.

The crew of a Puerto Rico Police Joint Force of Rapid Action marine unit interdicted the second illegal voyage May 18, approximately three nautical miles off the coast of Aguadilla, Puerto Rico. The Coast Guard Cutter Winslow Griesser arrived on scene shortly thereafter and embarked the migrants, 11 men and a woman, from the 20-foot makeshift vessel. The migrant group later embarked aboard the Coast Guard Cutter Donald Horsley for their repatriation.

Prior to embarking, the Coast Guard crews provided the migrants with lifejackets. Once aboard a Coast Guard cutter, they receive food, water and basic medical attention.

"Illegal migrant voyages in the Mona Passage are incredibly dangerous," said Lt. Christopher Martin, cutter Donald Horsley commanding officer. "The vessels utilized in these ventures are often unseaworthy, lack basic safety equipment, and are grossly overloaded putting each person on the voyage at risk. We are fortunate we were able to locate these vessels before the situation worsened, safely removing all 66 persons and repatriating them to the Dominican Republic."

The cutter Donald Horsley rendezvoused with a Dominican Republic Navy vessel just off Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, where the crew transferred and completed the repatriation of the migrants to Dominican Republic Navy authorities.

Cutters Donald Horsley and Winslow Griesser are 154-foot fast response cutters homeported in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

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# Coast Guard Repatriates 22 Migrants from 2 Interdictions to Cuba



The Coast Guard Cutter William Trump (WPC 1111) crew repatriated 22 Cuban migrants to Cuba, May 14, 2021. Coast Guard District Seven watchstanders received a report from the Cuban Border Guard stating a chug was headed northbound, Monday, approximately 14 miles north of Havana, Cuba. *U.S. COAST GUARD*

MIAMI – The Coast Guard Cutter William Trump crew repatriated 22 Cuban migrants to Cuba, Friday, from two interdictions, the Coast Guard 7<sup>th</sup> District said in a May 14 release.

In the first interdiction, a Coast Guard Station Key West small boat crew and Customs and Border Protection Air and Marine surface asset located a migrant vessel, Saturday, after CBP AMO's maritime patrol aircraft reported two personal watercrafts headed northbound approximately 26 miles southeast of Key West.

In the second interdiction, Coast Guard Cutter Isaac Mayo crew intersected the chug approximately 82 miles southwest of Key West and embarked the migrants with no medical concerns reported.

"Migrant interdiction patrols help save lives by deterring dangerous illegal migrant activity and removing migrants from dangerous environments," said Capt. Michael Gesele, Coast Guard District Seven Chief of Enforcement. "The Coast Guard patrols the Florida Straits, Windward Passage and the Mona Passage, maintaining a solid presence with air and sea assets.

Migrants attempting to enter the United States illegally can expect to be repatriated, regardless of their nationality.”

Since Oct. 1, 2020, Coast Guard crews have interdicted 228 Cubans compared to:

5,396 Cuban migrants in Fiscal Year 2016

1,468 Cuban migrants in Fiscal Year 2017

259 Cuban migrants in Fiscal Year 2018

313 Cuban migrants in Fiscal Year 2019

49 Cuban migrants in Fiscal Year 2020.

Once aboard a Coast Guard cutter, all migrants receive food, water, shelter and basic medical attention. Throughout the interdiction, Coast Guard crew members were equipped with personal protective equipment to minimize potential exposure to any possible case of COVID-19. There were no migrants in these cases reported to have any COVID-19 related symptoms.

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## **USCGC Hamilton Concludes Black Sea Operations**



USCGC Hamilton (WMSL 753) and a Ukrainian coast guard vessel conduct underway maneuvers in the Black Sea, May 8, 2021. Hamilton is on a routine deployment in the U.S. Sixth Fleet area of operations in support of U.S. national interests and security in Europe and Africa. *U.S. COAST GUARD*

BLACK SEA – The Legend-class national security cutter USCGC Hamilton (WMSL 753) transited from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean Sea, concluding the crew’s recent Black Sea

operations and engagements, May 14, 2021, the Coast Guard Atlantic Area said in a May 15 release.

Hamilton entered the Black Sea on April 27, 2021, in support of NATO Allies and partners. Hamilton is the first U.S. Coast Guard cutter to visit the Black Sea since 2008. The last U.S. Coast Guard cutter to visit the Black Sea, USCGC Dallas (WHEC 716), sailed to the Black Sea twice, in 2008 and 1995.

“Operating in the Black Sea these last few weeks has strengthened our enduring partnerships with regional maritime forces,” said Capt. Timothy Cronin, commanding officer of Hamilton. “Our time in this critical waterway also reinforced our commitment to maintaining freedom of movement in international waters for all nations. The Black Sea is not owned by any one nation; it belongs to the world.”

While in the Black Sea, the crew of Hamilton operated with Black Sea partner navies and coast guards and made two port visits.

Within the first week of arriving in the Black Sea, Hamilton’s operations with the Turkish navy Yavuz-class TCG Turgutreis (F 241) included passing exercises and cross-platform helicopter operations with a Turkish Bell UH-1 Iroquois helicopter and their embarked U.S. Coast Guard MH-65 Dolphin helicopter.

Hamilton conducted exercises with the Georgian coast guard. Hamilton crewmembers executed search and rescue patterns, simulated survivor rescue training, helicopter hoisting evolutions, approaches for towing, and ship communications with the Georgian coast guard vessels Dioskuria (P 25) and Ochamchire (P 23), May 2-3. These maneuvers and operations enhanced the proficiency in specific mission areas familiar to both coast guards.

On May 4, the Hamilton team called on Batumi, Georgia, for

engagements with Georgian coast guard leadership and local Georgian representatives. Upon arrival, the crew was greeted with a Georgian demonstration of dancing and singing after conducting the U.S. and Georgian national anthems. The Georgian coast guard and Hamilton also conducted several tours, a dinner, and a five-kilometer run to foster camaraderie.

Hamilton conducted maritime law enforcement, search and rescue, and ship handling operations with Ukrainian navy vessel Island-class patrol boat Starobilsk (P 241) and Ukrainian border guard vessel Kuropiatnikov (BG 50), May 9-10.

These operations increased interoperability as a part of a regional effort to bolster maritime partnerships with NATO Allies and partners. The next day, Hamilton conducted a port visit in Odesa, Ukraine, where the crew conducted maritime law enforcement training with the maritime border guard and exchanged damage control and firefighting expertise with the Ukrainian navy. Hamilton also served as the training platform for the Ukrainian 73rd Special Force Unit to conduct maritime law enforcement training.

The Hamilton crew conducted its final operations in the Black Sea with Romanian Navy Frigate Mărășești (F111) and Bulgarian corvette Bodri (BGS 14) on May 13, 2021. The vessels executed passing and communications exercises and flight operations with the Hamilton's MH-65 Dolphin helicopter detachment aircrew.

The U.S. Coast Guard is conducting a routine deployment in U.S. Sixth Fleet, working alongside Allies, building maritime domain awareness, and sharing best practices with partner nation navies and coast guards.

Hamilton is the fourth national security cutter and is the



fifth named for the father of the U.S. Coast Guard, Alexander Hamilton, the first secretary of the treasury and advocate for creating the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service.

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# HII Begins Fabrication of National Security Cutter Friedman



Ingalls shipbuilder Jason Jackson starts fabrication of steel for the newest Legend-class national security cutter Friedman (NSC 11). Also pictured, from left, are Cmdr. Christopher Lavin, acting commanding officer, PRO Gulf Coast; Amanda Whitaker, Ingalls NSC ship integration manager; and Dianna Genton and Braxton Collins, Ingalls hull superintendents. *HII / Derek Fountain*

PASCAGOULA, Miss. – Huntington Ingalls Industries' Ingalls Shipbuilding division announced today the start of fabrication of Legend-class national security cutter Friedman (WMSL 760). The start of fabrication signifies the first 100 tons of steel have been cut, the company said in a May 11 release.

"Our workforce has invested more than a decade of effort, creativity and resolve to make the Legend-class national security cutter production line incredibly efficient and strong," Ingalls Shipbuilding President Kari Wilkinson said. "We are pleased to achieve this milestone and will continue to look for any additional opportunity in our processes and approaches to provide the most affordable and capable ships to our customers."

NSC 11 is named to honor Elizebeth Smith Friedman. Friedman

was a code breaker during the Prohibition Era who, as a civilian, intercepted and solved coded messages from racketeers and gangs and delivered them to the Coast Guard. During World War II, she worked against German espionage communications and developed information that was critical to counterintelligence work in the Southern Hemisphere. Friedman's work resulted in hundreds of criminal prosecutions, saved thousands of lives and laid the groundwork for the science of cryptology and the establishment of the modern-day National Security Agency.

The Legend-class NSC is the most technologically advanced ship in the Coast Guard's fleet, which enables it to meet the high demands required for maritime and homeland security, law enforcement, marine safety, environmental protection and national defense missions. NSCs are 418 feet long with a top speed of 28 knots, a range of 12,000 miles, an endurance of 60 days and a crew of 120.

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## Coast Guard Repatriates 13 of 14 Migrants to Dominican Republic



The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Winslow Griesser repatriates 13 of 14 migrants to Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic May 11, 2021. A Puerto Rico Police marine unit interdicted the migrant group aboard a makeshift vessel May 9, 2021, just off the coast of Rincon, Puerto Rico. The interdiction is the result of ongoing efforts by Caribbean Border Interagency Group (CBIG) partner agencies to combat illegal migrant smuggling. *U.S. COAST GUARD*

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – The Coast Guard Cutter Winslow Griesser crew repatriated 13 of 14 migrants to the Dominican Republic, following the interdiction of a migrant vessel just off the coast of Rincon, Puerto Rico, the Coast Guard 7th District said in a May 12 release.

The migrant group consisting of 13 males, including a 16-year-old minor, and a pregnant woman, claimed being Dominican Republic nationals.

One of the interdicted migrants remains in Puerto Rico to face possible federal prosecution on charges of attempted illegal re-entry into the United States.

The interdiction is the result of ongoing efforts by Caribbean Border Interagency Group (CBIG) partner agencies to combat illegal migrant smuggling.

Coast Guard watchstanders at Sector San Juan received a call from a U.S. Border Patrol agent at 3:39 a.m. May 9 reporting a Puerto Rico Police Joint Forces of Rapid Action marine unit had intercepted a migrant vessel, approximately three nautical miles off the island's west coast. During the interdiction, two of the migrants jumped into the water and attempted to swim to shore.

A Coast Guard MH-65 Dolphin helicopter from Air Station Borinquen launched to search for the two migrants in the water. Once on scene, the Coast Guard aircrew spotted the two men struggling to stay afloat and vectored in the Coast Guard Cutter Winslow Griesser's cutter boat to their position. The Coast Guard boat crew safely recovered the two men, who were embarked, along with the other migrants, aboard the cutter Winslow Griesser.

Prior to embarking, the Winslow Griesser crew provided the migrants with lifejackets. Once aboard the cutter, they received food, water and basic medical attention.

"I commend the responding units in this case," said Cmdr. Beau Powers, Sector San Juan chief of response. "Their efforts helped save two lives from drowning and ensured the safe return of 13 of the migrants to the Dominican Republic. We call out to anyone considering taking part in an illegal voyage across the Mona Passage that you not take to the sea. The perils are quite real, and your life and the lives of everyone else in the voyage will be in great danger."

The crew of the cutter Winslow Griesser transferred 12 adult migrants to a Dominican Republic Navy vessel May 10 and repatriated the minor to Dominican Republic authorities in Santo Domingo Tuesday morning.

Cutter Winslow Griesser is a 154-foot fast response cutter homeported in San Juan, Puerto Rico.