

Coast Guard Cutter Vigilant Returns Home After Seizing 3,100 Pounds in Drugs



The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Vigilant (WMEC 617) poses for a photo with contraband seized or transferred aboard the cutter during a deployment in the Caribbean Sea, Aug. 16, 2025. Vigilant's crew conducted a two-month, maritime border security patrol in the Windward Passage and Caribbean Sea to protect America's maritime borders and prevent illicit drug smuggling in the region. (U.S. Coast Guard photo)

[Release From U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area](#)

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. – The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Vigilant (WMEC 617) returned home to Cape Canaveral, Aug. 19, following a 59-day patrol in the Caribbean Sea and Windward Passage.

During the patrol, Vigilant's crew interdicted 3,100 pounds of illicit drugs in the Caribbean Sea while underway in the Coast

Guard Southeast District's area of operations. Vigilant's crew deployed in support of the Joint Interagency Task Force – South (JIATF-S) mission of detecting and monitoring illegal drug shipments in the maritime domain for subsequent interdiction and apprehension.

On July 25, a maritime patrol aircraft notified Coast Guard Cutter Vigilant's crew of a suspicious go-fast vessel approximately 180 miles south of the Dominican Republic. Vigilant's boarding team interdicted the vessel, seizing more than 1,410 pounds of cocaine and 80 pounds of marijuana.

On Aug 15, a maritime patrol aircraft notified Coast Guard Cutter Vigilant's crew of a suspicious go-fast vessel approximately 35 miles southwest of Haiti. Vigilant's boarding team interdicted the vessel, seizing more than 1,615 pounds of marijuana.

These drug seizures contributed toward the Coast Guard's largest drug offload in history. To read more about Coast Guard Cutter Hamilton's (WMSL 753) recent offload, visit: [Coast Guard achieves historic milestone with offload over 76,140 lbs. in illegal narcotics at Port Everglades > United States Coast Guard News > Press Releases](#)

Vigilant's crew initially deployed in support of Operation Vigilant Sentry (OVS) while on patrol in the Windward Passage, working alongside other Coast Guard assets to deter illegal alien migration along the coast of Haiti.

Crew members executed maritime intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance operations while maintaining a continuous presence in the region. This mission is essential to deterring unsafe and unlawful migration ventures bound for the United States.

"I am incredibly proud of this crew's dedication, performance

and resilience during a challenging 59-day patrol in support of Coast Guard and national objectives to secure our maritime borders and safeguard lives at sea," said Cmdr. Steven Welch, commanding officer of Vigilant. "Working closely with our Department of Defense and law enforcement partners, as well as multiple partner nations, we seized or disrupted over 3,100 pounds of illegal narcotics bound for the United States. Additionally, we safeguarded lives at sea by preventing dangerous and illegal migration attempts across the open ocean in unseaworthy vessels. We look forward to returning home to our families and friends and beginning the arduous process to prepare Vigilant and her crew for the next deployment."

Detecting and interdicting illicit drug traffickers on the high seas involves significant interagency and international coordination because 80% of drugs are interdicted on the high seas. U.S. Southern Command's Joint Interagency Task Force – South based in Key West conducts the detection and monitoring of aerial and maritime transit of illegal drugs. Once interdiction becomes imminent, the law enforcement phase of the operation begins, and control of the operation shifts to the U.S. Coast Guard throughout the interdiction and apprehension.

OVS is a Department of Homeland Security-led operation comprised of federal, state and local partners responsible for preventing and responding to maritime migration. OVS, previously known as Homeland Security Task Force – Southeast, was established in 2003 and is comprised of more than 50 federal, state, and local agencies.

Vigilant is a 210-foot, Reliance-class medium endurance cutter. The cutter's primary missions are search and rescue, counter-drug operations, alien interdiction and enforcement of federal fishery laws.

Vigilant is an asset that falls under the command of U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area. Based in Portsmouth, Virginia,

Atlantic Area oversees all Coast Guard operations east of the Rocky Mountains to the Arabian Gulf.

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