

The Guardian

From the "Heartland of America"



Tradewinds 2012 * Hurricane Isaac * Light Scapers

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The Guardian

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Happy New Year!

As we round out our year and come to the closure of 2012, we are able to look back at the momentous year we have had.

The following pages will illustrate the rescues, missions and unwavering dedication showed by the members of the Eighth Coast Guard District. They also give you the glimpse into the personal life of Coasties and their hobbies.

This year has given us many challenges to face and many great memories to keep. We must always remember where we've come from to be able to prepare for where we are going.

I wish you and your family a very Happy Holiday season and good luck in the New Year.

Have a safe and happy holiday season.

Lt. Lily Zepeda
District Eight Public Affairs Officer



The Guardian
From the "Heartland of America"

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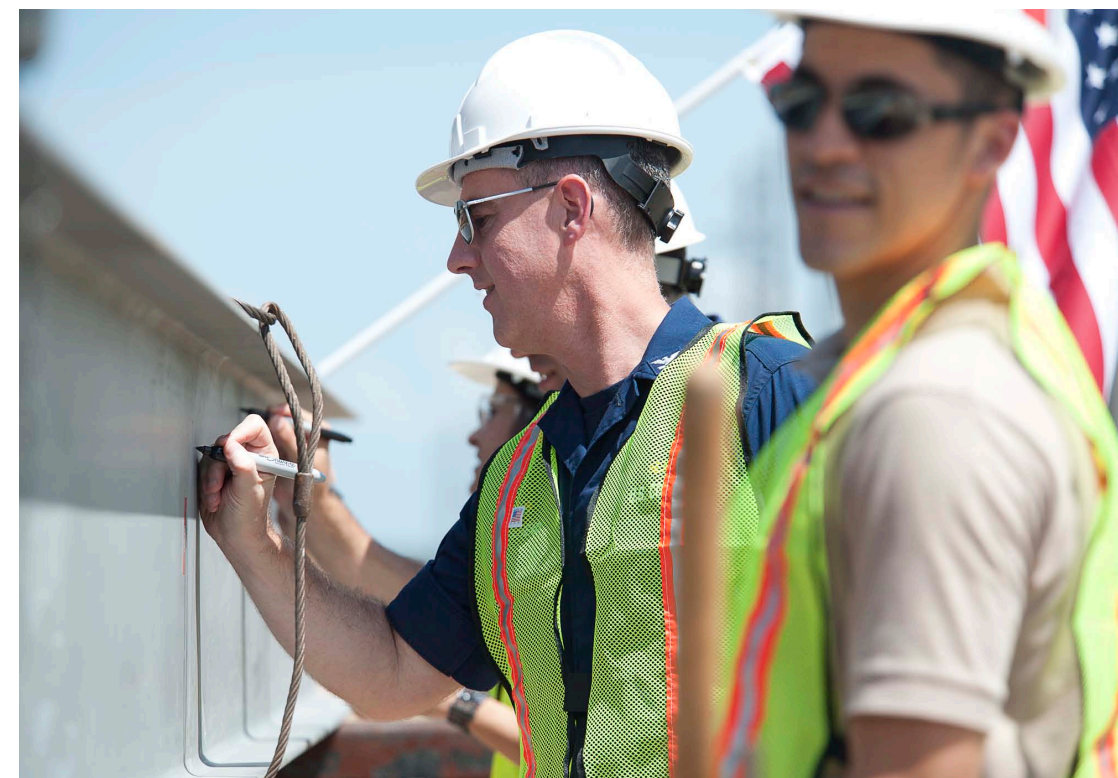
Is there an event you want covered in The Guardian? Do you have an opinion to be heard? Does your unit have anything newsworthy to report? If so, we want to hear from you. Call us at (504) 671-2020.

Front cover photo by PA3 Ryan Tippetts
Back cover photo by PA3 Richard Brahm



▲ A Coast Guard MH-65C Dolphin demonstrates hoisting capabilities at a search-and-rescue demonstration for the Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics air field tour at Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base New Orleans.

◀ Coast Guard crewmembers from Air Station Houston test their dry suits for leaks at the 288 Lakes sports training facility. The crewmembers conducted annual wet training, which included life raft procedures, basic ship board damage control and flare training.



▲ Capt. James Whitehead, commanding office of Sector Houston-Galveston, signs the final piece of structural steel for the new Sector Houston-Galveston building before it is lifted and bolted into place at Ellington Field, Texas.

▲ Lt. Bruce Wells, a member of Coast Guard Maritime Safety and Security Team New Orleans, is embraced and in the company of his two daughters for the first time in six months at the Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base New Orleans in Belle Chasse, La. Wells was deployed in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, where he supported Operation Enduring Freedom.



Petty Officer 3rd Class Stephen Cantu, an avionics electrical technician with Air Station Houston, experiences weightlessness for the first time aboard a NASA-contracted Zero-G plane, approximately 30,000 feet above the Gulf of Mexico. The Zero-G plane is a modified Boeing 727-200 that was contacted by NASA to perform microgravity services that simulate weightlessness or reduced-gravity conditions for the passengers and payloads.

RUGGER to the RESCUE

Story by PA3 Jonathan Lally

The stench of sweat mixed with mud fills your nostrils while tension constricts the muscles in your body, as you prepare to fend off opponents for possession of an oval, four-paneled leather object. The object in question is...a rugby ball.

In 1983, the only official Coast Guard sports team formed. The following year, they competed against the four other military branches in the first Armed Forces Bowl. Annually, the five service branches compete and in 1991 the Coast Guard team won first place. It took them nearly 20 years to place once again, where they took home second place.

Like any team, throughout its existence, members come and go due to various reasons. As transitions take place, new blood, so to speak, fuses into the team, reviving it with new vigor. Within this setting, you'll find the Coast Guard Rugby team's newest player, Petty Officer 3rd Class Scott Garren, a rescue swimmer with Coast Guard Air Station New Orleans.

Garren was invited to try out for the team this summer, and he said the try-out process was basically a week's worth of practice. The Saturday following their practices, Garren and the team represented the service at the

2012 Armed Forces Rugby Championship held at Infinity Park in Glendale, Colo.

"The games were pretty tough, but they were close games each," said Garren. "I think if we had just a little bit more practice and time working together we would have performed better."

Before stepping on a rugby field for the first time two years ago, Garren participated in sports back in both high school and college.

"In high school I played football, baseball and wrestled, earning the New Jersey wrestling state championship title," said Garren. "In college, I wrestled at North Carolina State, winning three Atlantic Coast Conference titles. I would say wrestling helped me the most for rugby because it aided me in learning proper body position, tackling and overall fitness."

Garren said he finds most people compare rugby to football, but from his experience in playing football, he compares rugby closer to soccer. He explained that in football, players get a short rest between plays, while in rugby there are almost no breaks.

"Our practices were about six hours of grueling work a day for the whole week," said Garren. "The whole process was abso-





▲ Petty Officer 3rd Class Scott Garren, a rescue swimmer with Coast Guard Air Station New Orleans, takes a minute to pose for a photo during the air station's annual wet drills in New Orleans. Garren and other rescue swimmers are responsible for the upkeep of aircraft survival equipment and properly training aircrews in survival techniques.

lutely fantastic and the games were a complete blast, basically 14 minutes of full on sprints."

After battling, battering and competing against each other on the field, the five branches enjoy a time of celebration and recognition for outstanding players during the tournament. Garren and another member of the Coast Guard team were chosen as the "outstanding players" for their team.

"Being recognized during the award banquet as an outstanding player for our team was a fantastic honor," said Garren. "It was a complete honor and surprise because we had some excellent players!"

Garren got involved with rugby because he enjoys playing sports and was told about a local league that plays in the New Orleans area by one of the pilots at the air station. Since that initial experience of rugby, Garren was hooked.

Just like the Coast Guard's rugby team has a history, so does the sport of rugby itself.

As far back as the 1400s multiple versions of football were played, but rugby originated around the mid-1700s at the Rugby School in Warwickshire, England. At the time it was a very rough version of today's game, where in-



▲ The Coast Guard Rugby team poses for a group photo at the 2012 Armed Forces Rugby Championship held at Infinity Park in Glendale, Colo.

stead of a set amount of players per side, there was no limit to the opposing teams. Steadily as the game became more popular, it was refined into what is played today.

Archaic forms of rugby, still unrefined to today's standards, were being played in America at Harvard, Yale and Princeton universities around the 1840s. In the 1920 Olympic Games, the U.S. Rugby team, a still fairly young rugby team, shocked the world by taking gold. The 15-man U.S. team had a repeat performance in the 1924 Olympic Games, and it was the last time rugby was played in the Olympics.

The sport is scheduled to make a comeback to the famous world competition in the 2016 Olympic Games, but unlike the 1924 Games, the rugby teams will not have 15-man teams. The teams will be reduced to seven-man teams following the Rugby Union rules instead of the Rugby League rules.

Garren was a participant in an historical game for the rugby tournament, adding to the rich history of the Coast Guard Rugby team. During this year's Armed Forces Rugby Championship, the five military branches played in the Rugby Union rules of seven-man teams. In years past, the branches played as 15-man teams following the Rugby Leagues rules.

Next year, the Coast Guard Rugby team will be celebrating its 30-year anniversary of existing and they hope to add to that celebration by winning the championship.

"Rugby is a great game and I plan to play as long as I am physically able to play," said Garren. Garren follows the legacy set before him by the few Coast Guardsmen to play on the service's team.



Fit for Full Duty

Story and Photo by PA3 Ryan Tippetts

The Coast Guard has long held the personal fitness of its members as a top priority. With the physically demanding operations of the Coast Guard, it is important that each of its members is fully capable of being physically able to accomplish the mission. Proficiency is key, and the key to being proficient is being healthy.

Lt. Sonha Gomez, Coast Guard Marine Safety Unit Houma, La., is a life-long fitness enthusiast. Recently, Gomez was featured in a southern Louisiana fitness magazine detailing her work out routines. She applies the same dedi-

cation she has to her job in the Coast Guard to her fitness.

"Personal fitness to me is really important because I'm able to maintain a healthy lifestyle physically, emotionally and mentally; as far as the Coast Guard goes it's a condition of employment," said Gomez. "Maintaining a healthy lifestyle ensures that we can accomplish our missions."

Being fit is nothing new to Gomez. As far back as she can remember, being active has always been a major part of her life.

"Fitness and sports have always been a part of my life ever since I was little," said Gomez. "I do it because I enjoy it, and it's something I want to incorporate into my lifestyle."

Gomez participated in various sports during high school, including soccer, volleyball, karate and cross-country. In college, she ran cross-country at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy in Kings Point, N.Y.

After graduating from Kings Point, Gomez accepted a commission in the Coast Guard.

"I grew up in a military family," said Gomez. "The military has always been a part of my lifestyle. I've always been active and I've always wanted to join the Coast Guard, so I think it was a perfect fit for me to do."

The Coast Guard has given Gomez a chance to use fitness in her everyday job.

"As an inspector, it helps maintaining the fitness standard because you have to climb through tight spaces, whether it's the ballast or the bilge tanks, being down in the southern Louisiana heat is a burden on you, and you want to complete your missions without burning out your body," said Gomez.

The Coast Guard has recently put stricter restrictions on its weight standards to ensure that its members are at their optimal operational weight.

"As far as the Coast Guard's weight standards, I think it's great that we have a standard we can all meet at a minimum," said Gomez. "I think it's important for us to set those standards, because it means that each individual will be able to accomplish the mission."

Gomez has shared her passion for work-

ing out with her shipmates, causing those she works with to be motivated about fitness as well.

"One of my most memorable workout experiences with Lt. Gomez was when she asked me to complete a new workout routine with her at 5 a.m. every weekday for 12 weeks," said Ensign Nicholas Jones, also stationed with MSU Houma. "It never failed, I could always count on her to be wide awake with pen and workout schedule in hand."

With weight-related health issues being so prominent the past few years, Gomez has shown others the way to live a healthy and fit life.

"Her positive attitude and eagerness to get rolling on the day's workout were great motivators and impossible to ignore," said Jones.

It never failed, I could always count on her to be wide awake with pen and workout schedule in hand.

"Exercising for me is a lifestyle that I enjoy, and I enjoy the rewards that come not just physically but mentally," said Gomez. "I think everyone should have some level of fitness in their life. It sets an example for others and shows you that it

is important to have that healthy lifestyle."

The Coast Guard is a physical, high-tempo branch of the military. It has countless missions that require its members to be in good shape and ready to act at a moments notice. Gomez believes it is important for others to realize how necessary staying fit is to the Coast Guard's missions.

"My end goal with fitness is that I love the reward of working out for myself, and I like that I'm setting an example for others, showing them that it is a positive aspect of your lifestyle, and it is extremely important," said Gomez.



Plotting^t_he Course

Story and photos by
PA2 Stephen Lehmann



▲ The flags of 15 countries fly over Barbados Defense Force base Paragon during a flag-raising ceremony. The flag raising ceremony signaled the start of Tradewinds 2012.

Through the sweltering 85-degree Caribbean heat and 79 percent humidity, U.S. Coast Guard members are renewing partnerships with 16 other countries during Exercise Tradewinds 2012.

Tradewinds is a Chairman of the Joint Chiefs-directed, U.S. Southern Command-sponsored annual exercise conducted by U.S. Marine Corps Forces, South in cooperation with partner nations, including Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Bahamas, Belize, Canada, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago.

Every year, the United States provides representatives from all five of its military branches, as well as agencies like the FBI, Naval Criminal Investigative Service and

the Joint Coalition Warfighting Center. They come together to share mission-focused knowledge and expertise, so each participating country will be able to improve capabilities in what it considers key missions, resulting in enhanced regional maritime capabilities and security.

The U.S. Coast Guard brings its skills to Tradewinds by providing team coordination training, maritime law enforcement training and incident command structure training to enhance partner nation capabilities in the area of risk management.

U.S. Coast Guard Cmdr. Tomas Kringel, Tradewinds 2012 lead maritime officer, sees a deep importance in making sure that these partner nations can effectively operate together if the situation calls for it. With 15 Caribbean islands participating in this year's Tradewinds event, each no more than 104

miles apart from any other one and each with its own navy and/or coast guard, if a disaster or large scale operation were to occur, the probability of two or more of these countries coming together to coordinate a response is very high.

"What we're doing is offering them a plat-

erability skills to Tradewinds," said Kringel. "Whenever we respond, we become part of a bigger team, like during Hurricane Katrina or Deepwater Horizon. We have trained and honed our culture to the point that other agencies look to us when it comes to lasting partnerships."

"One of the biggest things our partner nations ask us is to try to find a way to work with each of our country's individual sister agencies, so that they have better partnership collaborations and yet maintain their service or agency integrity," said Kringel. "And I think we're definitely doing that here."

Barbadian Coast Guard Lt. Cmdr. Neville Springer, acting commanding officer of Her Majesty's Barbadian Ship Pelican, appreciates the opportunities Tradewinds brings.

"To me, the most important thing we can take away is if I call

[Southern Command] and talk to Cmdr. Kringel, I'm not speaking to a name. I'm speaking to a face," said Springer. "And when he hears Cmdr. Springer, he can picture me. We've interacted and, therefore, we can relate on that personal level and get things done. I think that's a wonderful thing."

"I tell my people all the time: if you take anything from Tradewinds, take a friend," said Springer.



▲ U.S. Coast Guard Petty Officer 1st Class Nick Sutton, a maritime law enforcement instructor, leads a ship sketching exercise to help Exercise Tradewinds 2012 participants determine if a ship is concealing contraband as part of a maritime law enforcement course.

form so they can come together and conduct subject matter exchanges and refine their already exceptional skills," said Kringel. "In the case of a regional incident, they know each other already. They've worked together."

For Kringel, having the U.S. Coast Guard as a Tradewinds participant brings additional capabilities in maritime operations and team building to the table.

"We bring a lot of interagency and interop-



▲ A student looks down the sights of his mock Heckler & Koch Machine Pistol Model 5 as part of a maritime shipboard training drill during Exercise Tradewinds 2012.



◀ Members of the Barbados Defence Force perform small vessel debarkation drills during Exercise Tradewinds 2012.



▶ Barbados Defence Force Chief of Staff Col. Alvin E. Quintyne salutes passing service members during Exercise Tradewinds 2012.



▼ Coast Guard Lt. Efrén Lopez, lead Incident Command Structure instructor, answers a question from a student during Exercise Tradewinds 2012.

Tradewinds 2012



Keeping Tradewinds AFLOAT



Story by
PA3 Richard Brahm
Photos by
PA2 Stephen Lehmann

You are on a go-fast boat chasing down drug smugglers when your boat slams into a submerged object and your engines shutdown. Water is suddenly pouring in from multiple areas and is causing a plethora of other problems.

WHAT DO YOU DO?

That's the scenario members of the United States Coast Guard Cutter Oak proposed to multiple partner nations in a hands-on exercise as one portion of the maritime phase of Exercise Tradewinds 2012.

The exercise covered topics ranging from stopping the flow of water into your vessel, to how to properly seal a watertight door, to the different types and proper use of fire extinguishers.

Ensign Don Rudnickas is an engineering officer aboard the Coast Guard Cutter Oak and was in charge of the scenario.

"The exercise starts off with a small group from partner nations climbing into a

device called the wet trainer and the wet trainer has several things that can go wrong with it," Rudnickas said.

The wet trainer is a hands-on device that simulates a ship that has suffered some type of underway accident and is taking on water. As the water starts to pour in the people in the simulator have to stop it from sinking.

A small group of four is put in the simulator with all of the tools they need to fix any of the problems the instructors could throw at them. An instructor can adjust valves and levers that will cause the wet trainer to "sustain damage" to test the student's skills, knowledge and reactions.

From there, the exercise participants go to multiple other stations that have been setup, including fire fighting, shoring and first aid training.

"Our fire fighting station goes through fire fighting team tactics, theory, pump techniques and tactics," Rudnickas said. "Over at the shoring station they are taught how to shore a quick acting water type door, as well as a hatch in the deck, and from there they head over to our first aid station where they learn the basics of first aid."

"We want these guys to leave here with a general sense of how we operate together as a team, so when we operate on the water together in the Caribbean Sea we can function together. It doesn't matter which flag we are flying or what shade of blue we are wearing when we get on scene, we can show up and have a general sense of how everyone operates and we can pull together to effectively accomplish a mission."

◀ Coast Guard Ensign Donald Rudnickas, a shipboard damage control instructor, teaches a group of Exercise Tradewinds 2012 participants the best method to plug holes to stem incoming water.





The LIGHT SCALPERS

Story and photos by
PA2 William Colclough

O

n the banks of the lower Mississippi River, a secret yet unclassified mission rolls out in the stark daylight of the Big Easy. Within a few clicks of mile marker 86 along the St. Bernard Levee, one can hear what sounds like a three-piece orchestral buzz of chain saws, brush cutters and mowers. Secret, because, no one is aware of the high-value impact, except those who need it most. It is not a war so much as a battle against a massive natural vertical envelopment like giant green siegework.

Like a python, a three-acre swath of brush strangles, constricts and obstructs the light for an aid to navigation on mile marker 86. There are scores of lights and towers along both descending banks stalked, like innocent bystanders, by a rash of overgrowth. Left unimpeded, the thickets shroud vital light and visual signals for mariners making critical turns in tankers and cargo vessels that could be more than 1,000 feet.

For the 15 Coast Guardsmen with Aids to Navigation Team New Orleans, a lighted tower is not “just a light” as a life saved is not “just a person.” Their mission begins from the bottom up; they fan out in teams of two to three in a lawn patrol phalanx and sweep and slash the brush. With a safety observer on point, the 14 cut toward the shore. Every two years, ANT New Orleans conducts brushing operations for 80 percent of its shore-based ATON.

“We clear what we can – and as quickly as we can,” said Chief Petty Officer Michael Bollinger, officer-in-charge of ANT New Orleans. “We could actually be out here 365 days a year brushing constantly, but we do not have the time or manpower.”

Revealed in the clearing is Saxonholm Light 86, a 75-foot tower with a light that flashes a signal every six seconds. Known as an isophase 6, Light 86 assists pilots with steering and navigation when they are approaching critical turns. The light is on for an interval of six seconds and off for six seconds.

“The pilots notify us when they’re overgrown; if mariners tell us early enough, we can clear them,” said Bollinger.

From mile marker 86 up to Baton Rouge on mile marker 230, ANT New Orleans maintains approximately 280 structures that are prone to brush obstruction. Often, pilots will report various ATON as missing, when in fact, the brush made the aid seem to disappear.



▲ Crewmembers of Coast Guard Aids to Navigation Team New Orleans clear felled trees with machetes for Saxonholm Light 86 along the St. Bernard Levee system on the lower Mississippi River.

Every two years, the crew trims the growth down below the dayboards. A potential hazardous optical illusion occurs for mariners: as a pilot approaches a structure they can lose sight of the dayboard at a lower level in a smaller vessel, just as a sticky note on the bottom of a computer blurs the closer one looks at the screen.

Like traffic lights, the structures populate the vast maritime highway that is the Lower Mississippi River, and in particular, the Port

of New Orleans, which is the world’s busiest port complex. The great bulk of ANT New Orleans’ responsibility consists of maintaining the integrity of the link to the 14,500-mile Mid-America inland waterway system.

Every hour, up and down the river, vital commodities such as steel, forest products, copper and containerized cargo, to name a few, transit along the artery of the third longest river in North America. Like a heart, if any of the lights on both descending banks go out, there is economic arrest.

In the area around the Port of Baton Rouge alone, for instance, maritime commerce amounts to approximately \$1.28 million an hour. According to a 2004 study conducted by Martin Associates, maritime activity within the Port of New Orleans is responsible for \$800 million in taxes state-wide.

“Most of the vessels average \$30,000 to \$50,000 per hour, so if one of them grounds with a tug there could be additional costs for each tug, especially if lightering is required,” said Sean Duffy, vice president, maritime advocacy for the Louisiana Maritime Association. “When you’re counting on those lights being there and they are not, it can cause problems.”

Since more than 6,000 ocean vessels move through New Orleans on the Mississippi River annually, just one inoperable or “invisible” light disrupts channel flow like a blocked ventricle transmitting vital electric energy. At

any point along the path, mariners depend on aids working to help pump the nation’s economic lifeblood.

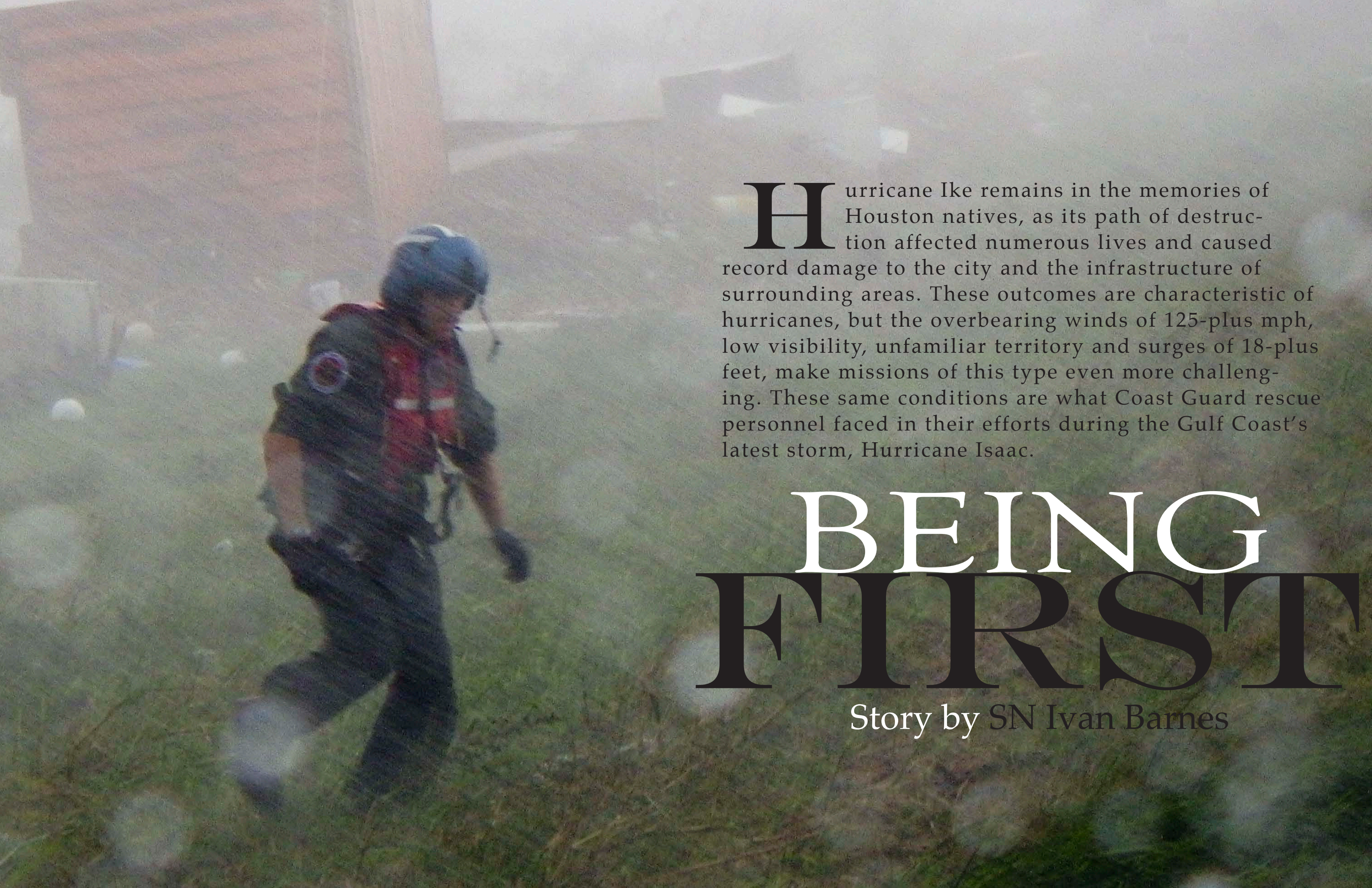
“At the end of the day, it’s rewarding knowing that it was hard work that got it done,” said Bollinger. “Looking back – knowing we did it on such a grand scale.”



▲ Petty Officer 1st Class Jeremiah Huss, engineering petty officer for Coast Guard Aids to Navigation Team New Orleans, awaits to retrieve equipment atop Saxonholm Light 86 along the St. Bernard Levee system on the Mississippi River.

On a mid-summer day, if one took a detour down the one-lane road on a hill along the St. Bernard Levee, they would probably espy a numbered light tower near the river shore. Like spent casings, acres of tree stumps and cut grass yield an unobstructed view of the channel in relief of flat-calm sail for mariners.

Whether by lake, river or shore, the secret is simple: the few hands of a dedicated team make the lights work. More than just trimming trees and changing a few wires, they light the way to help keep the wheelhouse of America’s prosperity turning.

A full-page background image showing a Coast Guard rescue swimmer in a blue helmet and orange life vest running through floodwaters. The swimmer is carrying a rescue tube and is moving towards the right. The water is murky and turbulent, with debris visible. In the background, a brick building is partially submerged and obscured by the floodwaters.

Hurricane Ike remains in the memories of Houston natives, as its path of destruction affected numerous lives and caused record damage to the city and the infrastructure of surrounding areas. These outcomes are characteristic of hurricanes, but the overbearing winds of 125-plus mph, low visibility, unfamiliar territory and surges of 18-plus feet, make missions of this type even more challenging. These same conditions are what Coast Guard rescue personnel faced in their efforts during the Gulf Coast's latest storm, Hurricane Isaac.

BEING FIRST

Story by SN Ivan Barnes



▲ A Coast Guard helicopter and crew from Air Station Houston flies over flooded Louisiana during Hurricane Isaac.

"The response to Isaac was met with some difficulty," said Lt.j.g. Charles Whitesel, a pilot with Coast Guard Air Station Houston. "It was probably one of my more difficult cases just because of the extreme conditions we were faced with. There were periods where visibility got so low we were having a hard time navigating. The winds were gaining speed. It was hard for us to distinguish between swamp area and land markers; we were unaware of where our towers were located."

Under normal circumstances crews spend no more than three hours in flight per day. As conditions worsen, the distress calls would continue to come in. The crew would ultimately spend 14 hours in flight during the course of two days in efforts to help those in need.

"We received one call from command that there was an elderly couple that was stranded in flood water," said Whitesel. "We had very few details of their exact whereabouts. The only information we had was that they were stranded in a restaurant, on Lake Pontchartrain. As we approached the two people, we noticed the woman was holding something in her arms, which we mistook to be an infant child."

With the assumption that there was an infant in danger, the crew found itself even more anxious to make this rescue a success. A decision to move closer to the restaurant, increasing the risk for the crew would be necessary. The building stood at approximately 40-feet tall and the helicopter was hovering an estimated 50 feet. The plan was to have the two individuals move further out in the water in order to maintain a safe proximity from the restaurant.

"As we hoisted the woman into the basket, we noticed that the woman was not holding a child, but her cat," said Whitesel.

"Once we got the situation under control and the couple safely into the helicopter, I could tell they were both happy to see us," said Petty Officer 2nd Class Joshua Magie, an aviation survival technician with Air Station Houston. As an added bonus, in route to rescuing them we located a group of about 20 people stranded in the water. We were able to send assets to rescue those individuals as well, so we couldn't have asked for better results. Seeing the relief on their face is why this job is so rewarding."

With approximately 120 rescues conducted

just this year, being recognized as a first responder comes with a fair share of responsibility.

"We are the first resource that people think of when you think of maritime distress -and that's a good thing," said Whitesel. "We are highly trained, highly effective and it's comforting to know that if I were on the other end of the distress call that there would be professional individuals with advanced skills to give aid to myself or family members."

"A lot of preparation goes into having successful outcomes. We spend a significant amount of time training, so as these events occur we revert back to that training without hesitation or added stress. We rely heavily on training, because in many cases we are the first responders on the scene and our expertise is necessary. We stand behind the motto that you practice like you fight, because it's very true."

▼ A picture of a flooded neighborhood in Louisiana,



Uniformity is key in ensuring the best possible result.

"We are very standardized in the Coast Guard," said Whitesel. "That's why we are so successful as a unit. We are capable of mixing and matching crews with air frames. Meaning, you can take an aircraft from New Orleans, put a crew in from Houston, with a rescue swimmer from anywhere in the Coast Guard, and still proceed with the exact same protocol," said Whitesel.

The Coast Guard's motto "Semper Paratus," or always ready, is well engrained in those service members who venture out into the worse of conditions to come to the help of those in need.

"Our professionalism and readiness is paramount to us and we take it serious when applying it to these missions," said Magie.

This air station crew has assisted in many rescue missions. The variability among the crew and their capacity to remain consistent to their training explains how Whitesel and Magie can reflect on a successful shared mission. The crew here in Houston efforts won't go unnoticed. They will soon receive the Achievement Medal for the exceptional work they exhibited during Hurricane Isaac, being ready when duty calls and standing in the gap as our nation's maritime first responders.



▲ Six Dolphin helicopters from Air Stations Mobile, New Orleans and Houston are brought inside the Air Station Houston hanger for protection and routine maintenance as they wait for Hurricane Isaac to make landfall.

► A picture of a flooded Louisiana neighborhood.



- A buoy deck supervisor ensures crewmembers properly secure a crane aboard the Cutter Saginaw.
- ▼ Cmdr. Michael Brandhuber, commanding officer of Coast Guard Air Station New Orleans, delivers a pre-flight brief to Rear Adm. Roy Nash, commander Eighth Coast Guard District and Capt. Samuel Walker, chief of response for the Eighth District.



◀ Members of a Coast Guard Disaster Assistance Response Team return from a medevac for a trucker from Texas along the flooded frontage road by the Highway 55 underpass in LaPlace, La.

DAUNTLESS: NO MISSION TOO GREAT



Story by
PA3 Richard Brahm
Photos from
the crew of Dauntless

The United States Coast Guard has many missions varying from search and rescue to aids to navigation. The Coast Guard is also responsible for deterring the unlawful entry of aliens into the U.S. As such, another important role of the Coast Guard is its alien migration interdiction role.

From May 11 through 17, the Coast Guard Cutter Dauntless successfully interdicted two unseaworthy vessels carrying more than 20 Cuban migrants in the Florida Straits, as well as serving as a holding platform for 116 Cuban migrants. While the migrants were aboard the Dauntless, their safety, care and overall well-being was the responsibility of the crew.

On May 11, the crew of the Dauntless interdicted a 25-foot blue “chug chug,” home-made slow, moving vessel, 51 miles south of Key West, Fla.

“The migrants were fleeing Cuba and were in an unseaworthy vessel for more than six days,” said Ensign Eric Hudson, public affairs officer for the Dauntless. “Among the passengers was an injured male who suffered from severe abdominal pains which required immediate medical attention.”

Petty Officer 2nd Class Edwin Casanova, a health services technician aboard the Dauntless, promptly aided the man by dressing and suturing his wounds.

“When I first heard that there was an injured person, I was anxious and looking forward to doing what I was trained to do, then the in-

jured person arrived and I knew exactly what to do and how long I had to do it to take care of the abdominal laceration,” said Casanova. “The next day we had another injury, but this time much worse and I was 100 percent confident of how I should treat him. But at the end of the day knowing I was able to help save someone’s life made was what made me feel the best.”

The remaining 18 passengers were brought aboard the cutter and given dry clothing, food and shelter.

Guided by Petty Officer 1st Class Christopher Johnson, the crew cared for the migrants on the Dauntless’ flight deck.

“We treat the migrants with respect and understanding because it is not really a law enforcement boarding, it is a

humanitarian mission,” said Johnson.

Later that night, the Coast Guard Cutter Pea Island safely transferred six additional Cuban migrants to the Dauntless.

Less than eight hours after the last transfer of migrants, a U.S. Customs and Border

Coast Guard and depart their unseaworthy vessel.”

“Transferring the migrants was no easy task, as the migrant vessel’s instability caused great concern for two of our small boat coxswains Petty Officer 1st Class Nicholas Freeman and Petty Officer 2nd Class Chadd Bond,” Hudson said. “The coxswains

suffering from legs injuries had infections and required immediate medical attention.

“The crew safely secured the first man in a rescue basket and lowered him to an awaiting 33-foot Special Purpose Craft – Law Enforcement boat, from Station Key West, for transfer to an awaiting hospital,” Hudson stated.

The second injured migrant’s injuries were more severe and he was medevaced by helicopter.

“The crew of the Dauntless set flight quarters and prepared to receive a Coast Guard MH60-Jayhawk helicopter,” said Hudson. “The talented rescue crew from Clearwater, Fla., lowered their rescue swimmer and safely hoisted the injured migrant.”

He was transferred to medical personnel in the Bahamas and received immediate medical care.

On May 16, the crew of the Dauntless safely transferred the remaining migrants to the Coast Guard Cutter Confidence.

“The crew of the Dauntless has eagerly and professionally performed their humanitarian mission, and they continue to safeguard the seas of the United States,” stated Cmdr. John Pruitt III, the commanding officer of the Dauntless.



▲ Petty Officer 2nd Class Edwin Casanova, a health services technician aboard Coast Guard Cutter Dauntless, assesses an injured migrant’s leg during migrant interdiction operations.

Protection aircraft notified the Dauntless about another boat nearby that was carrying 22 Cuban migrants.

“Initially the passengers were reluctant to get aboard the cutter’s small boats,” stated Hudson. “However, a man had suffered a severe leg injury after being struck by the craft’s propellers and his desire for medical treatment prompted others to willingly seek assistance from the

persevered as a result of their skill and training. As a result, both of the small boats were able to quickly disembark the remaining passengers for transfer to the cutter.”

By the next morning, the crew of the Dauntless would receive an additional 25 migrants bringing the total to 74.

On May 14, it was discovered that two of the migrants



Petty Officer 2nd Class Andrew Garcia, a marine science technician from Marine Safety Unit Texas City, waves to a cheering crowd during a Houston Rockets halftime show in the Toyota Center on military appreciation night.