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GALLATIN'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE WAR ON DRUGS



By ENS Tamara Suwallow

On January 28, 1988, CGC GALLATIN, while on a law enforcement patrol off the coast of Haiti, encountered the sailing vessel Capilya. GALLATIN crew members prepared to board Capilya, but were diverted to a search and rescue case. Five days later, GALLATIN came across Capilya once again, this time boarding the vessel and finding 8 to 10 thousand pounds of marijuana on board.

The GALLATIN was taking part in a joint law enforcement operation with the Navy (COMCARIBRON) when the Capilya was first sighted. A boarding party made up of ENS Robert Wiles, ENS Tamara Suwallow, ST2 Bruce Muray, GM3 Dave Hibbs, SN Mark Miller, and SA William Wiggins was sent to the S/V Capilya to check documentation and vessel registry.

The boarding team was denied permission to board the vessel, but after speaking with the master and glancing at the documentation papers, the vessel appeared to be of Australian registry. While awaiting a response from the Australian government for permission to board the vessel, GALLATIN was diverted westward to Jamaica to assist in a Search and Rescue case.

A few hours later after being diverted, information was passed to the U.S. Coast Guard that the Capilya was not of Australian registry and could therefore be boarded

as a stateless vessel. The only problem that existed now was that the sailing vessel was hundreds of miles away and would have to be relocated again. The GALLATIN headed back in the direction of where it had left the Capilya behind, in hopes that the bad weather and rough seas precluded the Capilya from sailing any considerable distance. After two days of searching, the Gallatin started towards Guantanamo Bay Naval Base in Cuba to refuel and begin another phase of her patrol.

Forty miles south of Cuba, GALLATIN resighted the Capilya and commenced boarding procedures. The original boarding team encountered resistance from the master before they were finally allowed on board. At this time the master claimed British registry and proceeded to explain that in addition to the three men on deck there was a woman below decks who did not wish to be awakened. A sweep of the vessel revealed no fourth person and also resulted in the discovery of marijuana in the forward and aft holds.

The Capilya and its cargo were seized and the crew arrested and taken into protective custody on board GALLATIN. A prize crew was selected from GALLATIN crew but again rough seas and heavy winds made the Capilya difficult to sail. The Capilya was eventually taken in tow by GALLATIN and brought to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba where custody was relinquished.