

R 142009Z APR 11

ALCOAST 172/11

COMDTNOTE 1600

SUBJ: USCGC SMILAX (WLIC 315) QUEEN OF THE FLEET

1. TODAY, AT A CEREMONY IN ATLANTIC BEACH, NC, THE CUTTER SMILAX RELIEVED THE WATCH AS QUEEN OF THE FLEET. COMMISSIONED ON 01 NOV 1944, SMILAX IS NOW THE OLDEST COMMISSIONED CUTTER IN THE COAST GUARD FLEET. SMILAX ASSUMES THIS DESIGNATION FROM CGC ACUSHNET, WHO WAS DECOMMISSIONED ON 10 MAR 2011.
2. SMILAX WAS BUILT AT THE DUBUQUE BOAT AND BOILER WORKS IN DUBUQUE, IA, MORE THAN 66 YEARS AGO AT A COST OF JUST UNDER 200,000 DOLLARS. AT THE TIME, WORLD WAR II RAGED IN BOTH THE EUROPEAN AND PACIFIC THEATERS, FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT WAS PRESIDENT AND GASOLINE WAS ROUGHLY FIFTEEN CENTS A GALLON. A LOT HAS CHANGED SINCE THEN, BUT THE ONE CONSTANT HAS BEEN THE CARE AND DEVOTION OF SMILAX'S PAST AND PRESENT CREWS WHO KEPT HER SHIPSHAPE IN BRISTOL FASHION.
3. SMILAX IS CURRENTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR MAINTAINING 1,226 FIXED AIDS TO NAVIGATION AND 26 FLOATING AIDS TO NAVIGATION THROUGHOUT THE OUTER BANKS OF NORTH CAROLINA. IN EARLIER YEARS, SHE PERFORMED SIMILAR DUTIES WHILE STATIONED IN FORT PIERCE, FL, FROM 1944 TO 1954, NEW SMYRNA BEACH, FL, FROM 1955 TO 1965, AND BRUNSWICK, GA, FROM 1966 TO 1999.
4. IN CONJUNCTION WITH DESIGNATION AS QUEEN OF THE FLEET, SMILAX BECOMES THE ONLY SHIP IN THE FLEET TO HAVE GOLD HULL NUMBERS. WITH HER GILDED HULL NUMBERS, SMILAX JOINS A SMALL AND HISTORICAL GROUP OF CUTTERS THAT PREVIOUSLY HELD THE TITLE OF QUEEN OF THE FLEET, INCLUDING: THE REVENUE CUTTER MCCULLOCH, CGC CAMPBELL (WHEC-32), CGC INGHAM (WPG 35), CGC FIR (WLM 212), CGC STORIS (WMEC 38), AND CGC ACUSHNET (WMEC 167).
5. CONGRATULATIONS TO SMILAX AND HER CREWS, AND BRAVO ZULU.
6. ADM BOB PAPP, COMMANDANT AND GOLD ANCIENT MARINER, SENDS.
7. INTERNET RELEASE IS AUTHORIZED.