



THE WATCHSTANDER

Newsletter of the Belize Coast Guard

Volume 7 Issue 2

30 June 2025

Defence Diplomacy



General Rosevelt Hernandez Aguilar Rear Admiral LF Elton Bennett

Defence Diplomacy: A series of engagements.

The Ministry of National Defence and Border Security provides overarching strategic leadership to our armed forces including a vision,

mission, and roles of the Ministry as it interplays with the forces. Promoting defence diplomacy is one of those specified task that the Ministry has been championing for our armed forces. Defence Diplomacy therefore forms

Pg3

Academic Excellence



The Belize Coast Guard is a very proud institution. We value the respect given by society and the recognition across the government service. With the acknowledgement that the organization is comprised of

its mission and its people, we recognize that our officers and sailors are central to this paradigm that rates the Coast Guard at the pinnacle in our nation.

Pg6

Counter Drug Operations



\$85k worth of drugs seized

Pg7



We are now concerned with the peace of the entire world.
And the peace can only be maintained by the strong.

George Catlett Marshall

Hurricane Preparedness 8

Exercise Tradewinds 9

Awards 10

Defence Diplomacy :

A series of engagements



a key component and cornerstone of our defence policies.

In April of this year our Minister of National Defence and Border Security, the Honorable Oscar Mira met with the United States Secretary of Defence, the Honorable Pete Hegseth at the Central American Security Conference in Panama. A host of regional security issues were discussed along the scope of transnational organized crime. These discussions were underpinned by one common value -the role of defence diplomacy in maintaining Central America as a region of

peace. It is with that deduction that I have been preoccupied with over the last quarter.

Defence diplomacy refers to the use of military and defence resources to achieve foreign policy objectives and enhance national security. It encompasses various activities, however for us in Belize the scope of those engagements is focused on military to military interactions and strategic partnerships for the promotion of regional security and stability. Over the past couple months I have been engaging with our

most closest allies: the British, the Americans, the Mexicans, and seeking out a new partnership with our Honduran neighbors.

My sequence of defence engagements commenced with a high profile office call from the British High Commissioner to Belize, His Excellency Allistar White. What made this visit such a special one was that this was his first official duty in Belize. HE Allistar White arrived in Belize only a couple days prior to visiting the Coast Guard. Perhaps still jet lagged, and not yet climatized we had the opportunity to tour the High Commissioner in our central area of operation at the Forward Operating Base in the Turneffe Atoll. Accompanying the High Commissioner were his Political Officer and the regional lead for climate change, environment and energy. This made for a very productive engagement on not only military political and security matters, but those non traditional security threats associated with climate change that has now transitioned into the range of national security concerns.

Our chain of defence diplomacy engagements took us to the Joint Task Force Bravo (JTFB) at Soto Cano Base in Honduras for a change of command ceremony. JTFB is a United States task force that is assigned to the Latin American and Caribbean region. They have been a true partner to Belize in a wide range of engagements from medical support, humanitarian, disaster relief, and training in support of countering transnational organized crime. Colonel Anthony Velasquez and myself were invited by the Deputy Commander of the United States Southern Command, Lt General Evan Pettus. During the change of command activities we had the opportunity to engage with the outgoing commander, Colonel Daniel Alder and thanked him for his support to Belize particularly in the areas of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. The incoming commander Colonel Rob Snyder pledged further support to Belize and committed to security cooperation particularly through Exercise Agile Bear a humanitarian exercise

Defence Diplomacy:

A series of engagements

which is planned for Belize in July of this year.

The Belize delegation, in keeping with Minister Oscar Mira's vision for strengthening defence diplomacy in the region, visited the Honduran

in the Gulf of Honduras. Discussions were also held on existing programs such as with the Belize Defence Force Air Wing and the Honduran Air Force, and the potential to expand

borders. The delegation returned to Belize on the 20th June after a successful defence diplomacy mission focusing on security cooperation.

Within a week after our

Hondo and our northern maritime border regions.

The conference was hosted by the Commander of the Mexican Army, Nolberto Cortes Rodriguez supported by the Army and Navy



Military Headquarters in Tegucigalpa where we paid complements to General Rosevelt Hernandez Aguilar, the Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff of the Honduran Military, and Rear Admiral Austacil Tome Flores, the Commander of the Honduran Navy. Discussions were held on improving information sharing and formalizing a framework for naval exercises and operations

such program to the Belize Coast Guard. Belize and Honduras shares a common maritime border in the Gulf of Honduras, we have shared interest in maintaining a region of peace, and we have shared challenges of transnational organized crime. Our cooperation and collaboration in combating these common threats is vital in deterring illicit activities from our

Honduras expedition we visited our Mexican Military commanders on the Border. Commanders of our armed forces met with their Mexican counterparts at the 19th Border Commanders Meeting in Chetumal Mexico from the 24-27 June 2025. The high level security cooperation meeting was designed to strengthen operational ties between Belize and Mexico along the Rio

Commanders from the state of Quintana Roo. The Belize contingent included myself, the Deputy Commander of the Belize Defence Force Colonel Anthony Velasquez along with our respective commanders and staff officers.

The outcome of the conference is a positive increase in operational tempo in our northern border region that focuses on deterring drug activities and interdicting drug

Defence Diplomacy :

A series of engagements

traffickers that operates between the two countries. This increase in operational tempo is consistent with the intention of the Minister of National Defence and Border Security to increase the operations of our security forces in the northern border region.

The Mexican Armed Forces are key military allies in the fight against transnational organized crime and are a proven and trusted force in support of Belize's security aims. The commitments made at the Border Commanders Conference for exchange of information and the conduct of mirrored operations along our

northern border region will continue to be a vital platform for maintaining security and stability in Belize.

Concurrently, our acting Vice Commandant, LCDR Alma Pinelo attended the Guatemalan 54th Anniversary of the Guatemalan military. This activity was hosted by the Guatemalan military Attache to Belize. Defence engagement activities with Guatemala is more delicate due to the territorial dispute and the ICJ process. Nonetheless, the higher political realm has consistently championed defence diplomacy in pursuit of our foreign

policy objectives. Those objectives are underpinned by peaceful interactions between Guatemala and Belize. Territorial disputes between neighboring states are a normal occurrence in the international political system and the Belize-Guatemala territorial dispute is no different; however, the way within which both countries, and with the support of partners and the international security system has been able to manage this dispute over time is nothing short of remarkable. Somewhere within that very complex political sphere that includes an international court, the Organization of

American States, partners and alliances, domestic political pressures, economics, history, pride... etc lies the theory of defence diplomacy. At the senior leadership level, we are very cognizant of the fragility of territorial disputes. We are witnessing conflicts across the globe where diplomacy has failed causing militaries to be used in its conventional role. Today, defence diplomacy has been taking shape, seeking non combat engagements, focusing on common threats, pursuing areas of cooperation whilst supporting peaceful and legal solutions.



Academic Excellence *cont.*

recognizes academic excellence as a critical component of its professional development and mission readiness. Academic performance plays a major role in promotions, training opportunities, and leadership development within the Service.

Over the past couple weeks we have had officers excelling in various overseas courses, and completing graduate and postgraduate studies. These are all the result of a conscious effort to increase the leadership and technical capacity of the Coast

Guard. We commence by recognizing our Vice Commandant, Captain Gregory Soberanis who completed the National Defence University in Washington DC. Captain Soberanis graduated with a Masters of Art in Strategy and also received a leadership award for his outstanding contribution to his colleagues and to the University. The broad objective of NDU is to “educate national security leaders in critical thinking and the creative application of military power to inform their respective national security strategy.

Our pride was boosted with the top student award on the Bridge Watchkeeping course at the Caribbean Maritime Military Academy in Jamaica. The Bridge Watchkeeping Course was designed to provide candidates with the necessary skills and knowledge to function independently and effectively in the performance of their duties as navigation officers, officer of the watch and fixing officer. The Course also developed officers to become effective Bridge Watchkeepers. This had two phases. The first phase was a fast paced theoretical learning stage

and the second phase took place in a simulator which enabled the students to the required skills and competencies as navigational officers.

The Coast Guard’s investment in education is manifesting into greatness already. Our contribution to the national effort in various sectors is already having returns. Areas such as the implementation of IMO’s regulations, maritime education & training for our different stakeholders, marine science are just a few areas where our contribution are having an impact. Captain Soberanis achievement at the National Defence University is no trivial accomplishment. The Belize Coast Guard was represented on the world stage, and we came out on top. NDU sits at the pinnacle for United States military officers who are selected or prospectus for generalship in the United States. Our very own Vice Commandant was able to impress the faculty that he is amongst the top level of leadership that graduated from the University. He is very well placed to make significant contributions to our national security strategy and national development.



Counter Drugs Operations

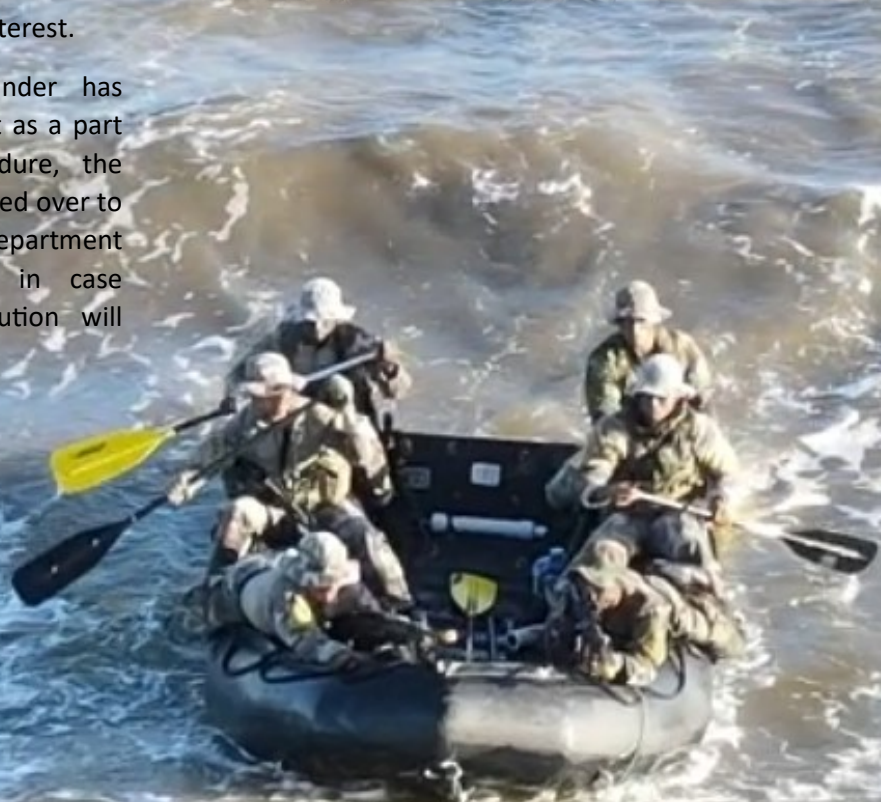
\$85k worth of drugs seized

Over fifty thousand dollars worth of drugs has been removed from our streets over the past quarter by the Belize Coast Guard. This includes cocaine and marijuana, both out at sea and on mainland. The Coast Guard has a layered counter drug strategy that commences with deterrence from its forward operating bases that are strategically located across the littoral. Our second layer is interdiction. This requires intercept capability in the form of direct intelligence, interceptor vessels, and the tactical conduct of counter drugs ops.

The past quarter has yielded much operational success by removing drugs from our streets including the arrest of one person. Our achievement in all of these three separate seizures are as a result of direct intelligence. This is where our interdiction line of effort acts as a fail safe for those that evades our deterrence lines. These interdictions are very important for Belize's security as these

drugs are destined for the Belize market. The implications are an increased in violence associated with the distribution of drugs. Whilst Belize has been classified by the US Justice Department as a regional transshipment location, there are portions of those shipments that remains in Belize and consequently fuel gangs and turf wars. Hence, the notion that drugs is not Belize's problem is a flawed premise. The Coast Guard's effort to combat illicit drugs is therefore one that is intertwined with the both national interest and regional interest.

The Watchstander has confirmed that as a part of the procedure, the drugs are handed over to the police department for evidence in case where prosecution will take course.



Hurricane Preparedness :

June to November

The Belize Coast Guard has a proactive and evolving hurricane preparedness strategy designed to protect both its personnel and the wider maritime community. Here's how they approach it:

Core Elements of the Plan

Force Protection: Their first priority is safeguarding Coast Guard assets, vessels and personnel by relocating them to secure areas before a storm hits. Now this is a crucial undertaking that requires the right balance. Whilst the

Coast Guard wants to secure its assets from storm damage, it also has to be available to support emergencies such as search and rescue. Getting this balance right is a crucial requirement in support of command decision.

Early Warning & Surveillance: They conduct exercises to identify and monitor remote fishing camps and isolated maritime locations, ensuring communication and evacuation plans are in place.

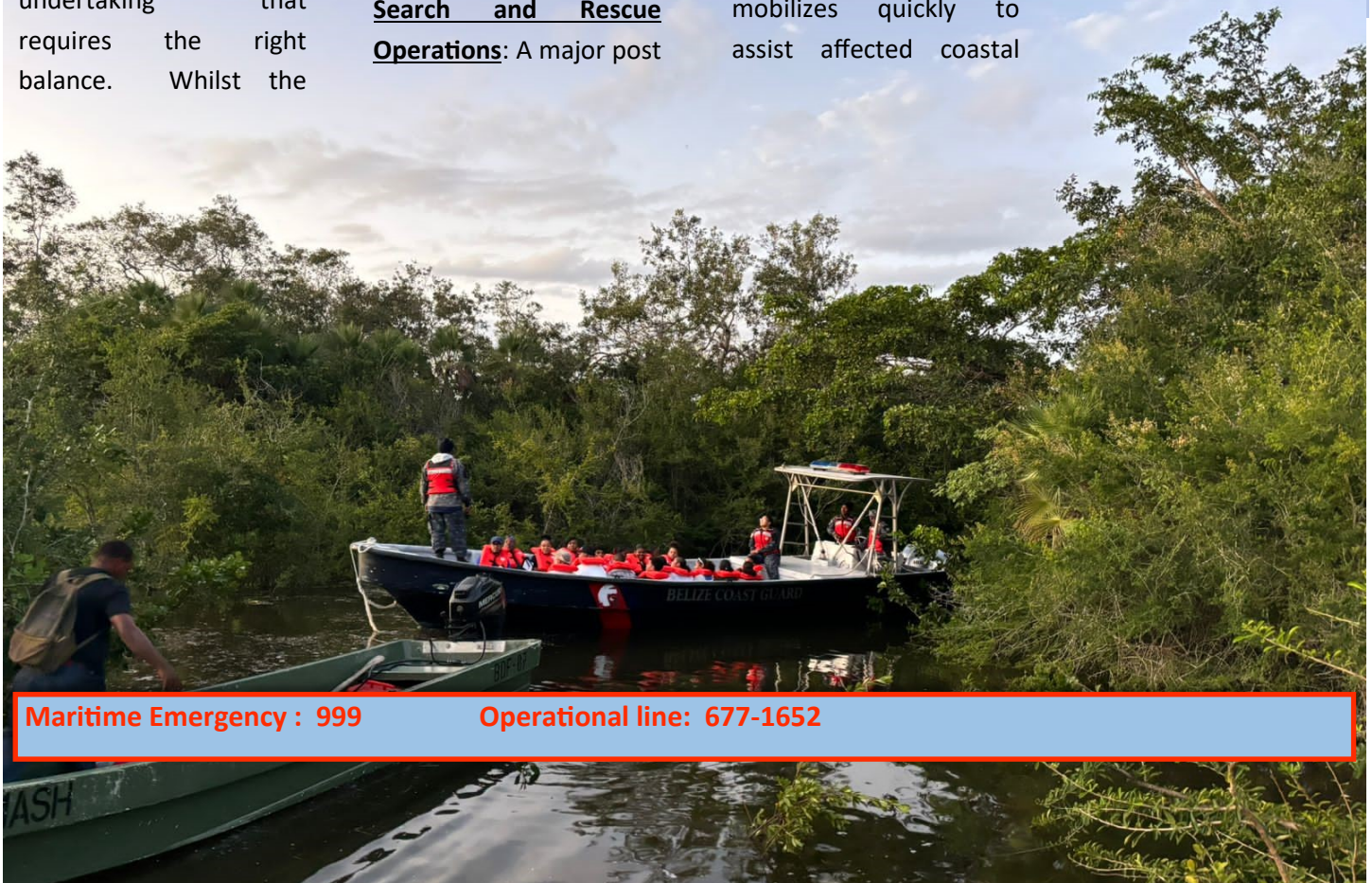
Search and Rescue Operations: A major post

-storm responsibility. The Coast Guard trains continuously to maintain readiness for emergency rescues. The National Search and Rescue Plan assigns the Belize Coast Guard as the lead for the coordination of maritime search and rescue. In its SAR role, the Coast Guard operational cell conducts operations as the national maritime rescue coordination centre, a duty that has as recent, been driving changes in procedures and the development of technology in support of search and rescue services.

Disaster Relief: After hurricanes, the BCG mobilizes quickly to assist affected coastal

and island communities with search and rescue, supply delivery, and evacuation.

With these wide range of tasks the Coast Guard would struggle had it not been for the stewardship of the National Emergency Management Organization (NEMO). Whilst there are fifteen different committees within the NEMO construct the Coast Guard is permanently embedded, or directly involved in six. This makes for a well coordinated Coast Guard in the execution of national level missions during the activation of NEMO.



Maritime Emergency : 999

Operational line: 677-1652

Exercise Trade Winds :

Trinidad & Tobago May 2025

Exercise Tradewinds 2025 was conducted in Trinidad and Tobago from April 28 to May 9, 2025. This is a multinational military and security training exercise aimed at enhancing regional cooperation in disaster response, counter-trafficking operations, and maritime security.

LTJG S. Valdez and PO2 W Altamirano represented the Belize Coast Guard as participants assigned to the Maritime Operations Center (MOC), where they contributed to the coordination of real-time simulated maritime operations.

The core objectives of the MOC track were to:

Develop operational capacity to support interagency and multinational maritime operations.

Reinforce the decision-making process within a command-and-control framework.

Practice coordination, tracking, communication, and response protocols in a regional context.

Enhance strategic planning, reporting, and mission execution effectiveness.

Observation:

-Effective Interoperability: Integration with foreign counterparts demonstrated the Belize Coast Guard's capability to adapt and operate under joint conditions.

SOP Variances: Minor procedural differences among countries occasionally delayed decision-making. Standardization or cross-training in regional SOPs is advised.

-Technology Integration: Some system incompatibility highlighted the need for enhanced MOC equipment compatibility.

-Gender Representation: Female participation in command roles was well-balanced and encouraged further inclusivity across participating nations.



Sailor of the Month



Sailor of the Month
1283 PO3 Moses Miller

April

PO3 Miller M can be trusted for performing any tasking within the Belize Coast Guard. He is always providing guidance and advice to his peers in any fields of any nature in the electrical field of work. He is a very responsible sailor, with a positive attitude towards the job; he can be called upon without any hesitation and accept the job given to him.

Petty Officer Arzu T has consistently demonstrated initiative, drive, and a strong commitment to excellence in everything he undertakes. He has proven himself to be an invaluable team member through his outstanding command and control, which have been evident in routine operations and complex tasks. His ability to lead with confidence and clarity has significantly impacted the overall success of his unit.



Sailor of the Month
1186 PO1 ARZU TREVIN

May

Under his command at Hunting Caye FOB, his patrol crew had high situational awareness. The crew has acted as the eyes and ears of the BCG while deployed at Hunting Caye FOB, and they proved that they were doing what was required of them to the Belize Coast Guard Mission and Operational orders.

The course of action taken by PO1 Arzu T, as the patrol commander and coxswain at Hunting Caye, was according to the Higher Command's instructions. While conducting his weekly Dotted Line Patrol, he intercepted a Guatemalan fishing vessel conducting "illegal fishing" in Belizean waters. The fishermen were "fishing without a valid fishing license" and "fishing without a valid boat license to fish." PO1 Arzu T apprehended the two fishermen and later transported them to mainland Punta Gorda to be charged. These fishermen were fined \$1,000 each for both offences mentioned above. PO1 Arzu T and crew also retrieved 01 x gillnet approximately 800ft long.



Sailor of the Month

June

Service Support Group, nominee for sailor of the month is a native of Dangriga Town PO3 Elias Kelly. He joined the Belize Coast Guard in 2017 with previous knowledge and skills in Masonry and other related trade knowledge. PO3 Elias Kelly has shown tremendous knowledge in the area of work which he is fully dedicated to. PO3 Kelly wishes to see his peers to develop in that area of work. Whenever he is called upon to perform any type of skill full masonry work, PO3 Elias Kelly is always willing to carry out any tasking both here on camp or out doing humanitarian work.

As a testament to his skill and professionalism, the Service Support Group, assigned him, as Seaman of the month for the Belize Coast Guard. Apart from his exemplary performance and professionalism, PO3 Elias Kelly is an avid runner and has maintained his physical standard throughout his time in the Belize Coast Guard. PO3 Kelly, is the true definition of UTRINQUE PARATUS, he is a physical example of what it means to be dedicated to service and personal growth and for that reason he is more than deserving of the award of sailor of the month.

Strategic Mission

To protect Belize Maritime Spaces from threats both foreign and domestic by providing maritime security, safety and protection of our people, industries and natural resources through military, law enforcement and humanitarian operations

LL: +501 2802560
Hotline: 999
Cell: +501 6141239
VHF: Channel 16
Email: coastguard@bncg.gov.bz

