



United States Coast Guard Auxiliary FLOTILLA 7-16 Gulfport, Florida



Volume XIV
2025 3rd Quarter

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THE BEACON



Gulfport radio antenna back, bigger and better

*"Comedians (and TCOs) are never really on vacation because you're always at attention...that antenna is always out there." Bob Newhart**

On September 7th, 2025, the end of an era of steady TCO at Gulfport 7-16 Radio arrived as the antenna was taken down, due to the damage from Hurricane Helene on Sep 26, 2024. Despite the extensive damage to the flotilla building, Gulfport Radio reset its operations outside of the condemned building and continued to provide TCO using portable setups and a pop-up shelter.



Last radio guard 9/4/25.

**Bob Newhart served in the US Army for two years in the Armed Forces Radio Service*

OFFICERS:

Flotilla Commander:

Howard Bush

Vice Flotilla Commander

Marty Richardson Jr.

FSO-CS & SR:

C. Anderson

FSO-IS & PA:

T. Steiger

FSO-FN:

W. Melnyczenko

FSO-HR & VE

H. Bush

FSO-PV:

L. Cooper

FSO-MT & PB

W. Hoover

FSO-PE

M. Richardson



Sept 7, removal of 716's antenna



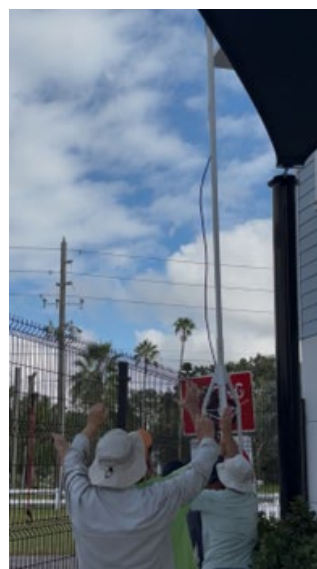
tower relocating to new home



new concrete base for antenna

Keep your contact
information current
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<https://uscg.experience.crmforce.mil/auxcommunity/s/login/tto://f>



raising the tower, 9/20/25



FC Bush

Carefully measuring the connection



TCO Hoover



Contact Us:

Telephone:

727-322-3040

Email:

auxgulfport@gulfport.com

Website:

<http://wow.uscgaux.info/content.php?unit=070-07-16>

"The Beacon" or Facebook

Submissions:

716tts@gmail.com



The antenna is raised!



TCOs Bush (r) and Hoover (l) conducting radio checks on 11/15/25 in new radio room space atop the Gulfport Marina.



Gulfport Radio's shared space with the Gulfport Marina, but what a space it is! Fridge, coffee maker, comfy seats, big screen, and a table. Still some arranging to do, but only after the City of Gulfport (FL) finishes its own remodel.



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First operational use supporting CG C-27 training flights in the Gulf
Thursday Dec 11, 2025.

Photos by Wayne Hoover, Reg Paul, Tom Steiger

Laurie Cooper, TCO

TS: Who is the TCO?

LC: Well, the TCO, telecommunications operator, is the land based safety net for our patrols, and we are on the other end of the radio. We keep in communication with the Coxswain and his crew while they're doing their evolutions out on the water, be it doing basic training for new boat crews or when they are out there doing training with the Coast Guard and the C27 drops. What we do is that we are basically radio communications, and we have a space where we set up. We make sure we communicate with the [facility], we understand what the patrol is going to be for the day. We know approximately the time frame we're going to be supporting them from when we set up in the morning until they debrief in the afternoon. So during that entire time, we are keeping communication with them, making sure we understand what their evolutions are, what their position is, and keeping track every 30 minutes to make sure they're reporting in and that they're safe.



- TS: You mentioned a space, so where does the TCO do this?
- LC: Our station, or our base here is Gulfport Radio, it used to be the old Miriam building, and that was a fixed space facility. We had a radio room, and of course, with the storms of last fall, fall of 2024. We lost the building. And fortunately, the radio equipment was salvaged, and the antenna was still intact. So we basically adapted and overcame, and we started doing our radio guards outside under a tent. We basically set up the radios, hooked up to the antenna, set up a canopy, a couple of chairs, and we were back in service again. Now, fortunately, thanks to the city of Gulfport, we have a new home, we have space in the Gulfport Marina, and a group of us disassembled the antenna at the Miriam Building, and then ended up putting it up at the Gulfport Marina. So that was a big effort over a couple of different weekends. So now we're looking to get all ducks in a row and get the facility inspected to make sure that we are back as Gulfport Radio again. And so we're looking forward to doing our radio guards and our new home at some point in the future.
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- TS: When does a TCO do their thing?
- LC: Radio guards are done when there are training evolutions. And the training evolution may be what they call a C27 drop, which you have one of our vessels on the water, and they are coordinating with the plane in the air, and that's a C27 drop. Typically, they're done during the day on Tuesdays and Thursdays because of the Coast Guard schedule. So we stand to support them during the day, on Tuesdays and Thursdays if they have a drop. Also, too,

continued..



what I was fortunate to come in on was that there was a lot of crew training. And with crew training you could have the boats on the water a lot. So there were lots of opportunities to do radio guards for the boats. And so that was great because once again, it was a repetition and understanding, you know, prompting them at 30 minutes, where are you? What's your position? What are you doing? And making sure that you are doing your job?

TS: Last question. Why? Why is a TCO necessary?

LC: Well, TCO is necessary because it's part of the entire system for training, for supporting the mission, which in this case, the guys are out training to become qualified crew members, and also supporting the larger mission of the Coast Guard with their training as well. And SAR, (search and rescue) too. When we are doing Radio Guard and when the crews are out there training, we are able to assist if something like a search and rescue comes along. Right. So we provide that additional bit of mission readiness for and support for the Coast Guard.



Photo by Wayne Hoover

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<http://ntc.cgaux.org/TrainingCourses.php>

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<https://www.facebook.com/uscgauxflotilla7.16/>

E-Directorate What's New!

<http://wow.uscgaux.info/content.php?unit=E-DEPT&category=WHATSNEW>

716 Members Achievements:



FC Bush presenting BQ certificate to Eric Denne.



FC Bush presenting Certificate of Appreciation to Bob McCormick for his VEs and Program Visits.

Photos by Wayne Hoover and Tom Steiger

BACK IN THE DAY: Anclothe Key Lighthouse

Drawing by Ronald Loche. Date unknown, State Archives of Florida



New Commander of Sector St. Petersburg,



Captain Courtney Sergeant

Captain Courtney “Corrie” Sergeant assumed the duties of Commander, U.S. Coast Guard Sector St. Petersburg in June 2025. She also serves as Captain of the Port, Officer in Charge, Marine Inspection, Search and Rescue Mission Coordinator, Federal On-Scene Coordinator and Federal Maritime Security Coordinator while directing Coast Guard operations along the West Coast of Florida and throughout the Tampa Bay region.

Sector St. Petersburg is comprised of 2,700 Active Duty, Reserve, Civilian, and Auxiliary personnel as well as 12 multi-mission units, including five boat stations, four cutters, and an Aids to Navigation team. Prior to this assignment, Captain Sergeant served as the Deputy Sector Commander and Response Department Head at Sector North Carolina from July 2020 to May 2025.

Captain Sergeant graduated from the U.S. Coast Guard Academy in 2004 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Marine and Environmental Science. Her first assignment was as a Deck Watch Officer on USCGC ACTIVE (WMEC-618), homeported in Port Angeles, WA. In 2006, she reported to USCG Headquarters in Washington, DC and served as a maritime law enforcement expert in the Office of Law Enforcement. From 2009 to 2012, Captain Sergeant served as a Command Duty Officer at Sector Puget Sound. Captain Sergeant studied ocean law and policy and earned a Master of Marine Affairs degree from the University of Washington in 2014.

Following graduate school, she was assigned to District Seventeen in Juneau, Alaska from 2014 to 2018 as the Domestic Fisheries Law Enforcement Section Chief, directing federal fisheries law enforcement operations in the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone surrounding Alaska. From 2018 to 2020, Captain Sergeant served as the Chief of Enforcement at Sector Mobile, Alabama managing the execution of all law enforcement and port and waterways security operations across three states.

Captain Sergeant’s military awards include the Meritorious Service Medal, three Coast Guard Commendation Medals, three Coast Guard Achievement Medals, eight Coast Guard Meritorious Team Commendations, and other personal and team awards. <https://www.atlanticarea.uscg.mil/Our-Organization/District-7/Units/Sector-St-Petersburg/Commanding-Officer/>



From the Center Console FC Bush

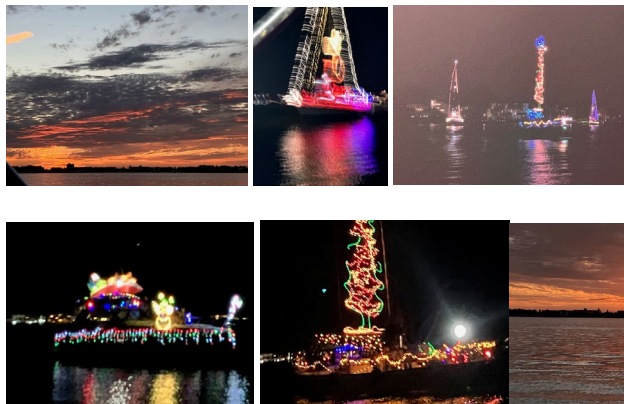


As our year of 2025 closes, changes are on the horizon. I have served over two years at Flotilla Commander as my predecessor resigned prior to the end of his term. Wayne Hoover will be our new commander for 2026 I will be his assistant as vice commander. Early this year we heard rumors that our flotilla would be dispersed to other units and division 7. Thanks for the dedication and resilience of our members in 716 that did not happen. To coin a phrase ,the Phoenix rising from the ashes, that's exactly what flotilla 716 did. Resilience dedication fortitude and moving forward. We did not let the destruction of our building hold us back. The city of Gulfport stepped in as I kept close contact. They acknowledge that and provided the community center for our meeting and boating safety classes and other events if needed. Denis Frein, Harbor Master at the Gulfport Marina provided us space for our radio room as 716 volunteers installed our 40 ft antenna and made it all happen. All of this provided the incentive to excel and make flotilla 716 one of the most progressive flotilla s in the entire division. Being the smallest but we have the accomplishments and credits higher than others two to three times our membership. We are number one in division in partner visits public relations and community outreach. Standing strong with over 150 vessel exams. Our credits do not put us in last place in anything. I will be presenting a certificate of appreciation along with a thanks from the United States Coast Guard a United States Coast Guard Auxiliary to our mayor and City council on December 2nd along with my presentation I'll be presenting Mayor Love with a challenge coin as we have witnessed first hand her dedication leadership and resilience. Her willingness along with the city council providing us with a building and critical resources was not just as an act of support It was a true act of partnership.

2026 will have a new coxswain at the center console, Wayne Hoover. He has proven himself over and over again and will guide us through this next year.

Happy Holidays!

From the Gulfport Holiday Lighted Boat Parade.



Photos by T. Steiger