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Coast Guard Team Successfully Rebuilds Buck Island Tower Light in St. Thomas

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The Coast Guard Aids to Navigation Team (ANT) Puerto Rico recently successfully completed the reconstruction of the Buck Island aids to navigation tower light near St. Thomas, the Coast Guard made known via release.

The eight-day operation resulted in a fully functional tower light that now assists maritime traffic entering Charlotte Amalie or West Gregory Channel.

Chief Petty Officer Robert Quinn, Aids to Navigation Team Puerto Rico officer in charge, praised the efforts of the crew and their collaboration with air and surface units and Standard Aviation professionals. The team of seven ANT PR crew members had recently completed the unit's Ready for Operations Inspection before undertaking the mission.

The crew traveled from San Juan, Puerto Rico to the U.S. Virgin Islands on a 55-foot Aids to Navigation Boat, carrying all necessary materials and equipment for the rebuild. Once in Charlotte Amalie Harbor, they transported the equipment to the Standard Aviation facility at Cyril E. King Airport, where they built two crates for a helicopter airlift operation to deliver the tower parts to Buck Island.

The tower rebuild was necessary due to damage sustained during Hurricane Irma in 2017. The crew righted the 20,000-pound concrete foundation, cut the old metal frame, and prepared for the installation of the new tower. The operation involved a sling load delivery of the tower to Buck Island, where it was assembled, installed, and made operational.

Quinn highlighted the importance of thorough planning and risk mitigation in the project. The team had identified a suitable tower for the project from former Naval Station Roosevelt Roads in Ceiba, Puerto Rico. The successful delivery and installation of the tower were a testament to the skills and teamwork of the pilots, aircrew, and ANT crewmembers involved.

The project, along with the reconstruction of two other light structures in the U.S. Virgin Islands last summer, has reduced the shore-infrastructure backlog by over \$1 million, the Coast Guard said. ANT Puerto Rico is scheduled to return to the U.S. Virgin Islands soon to disassemble and remove the remains of the old towers at Buck Island, Stephen Cay, and Current Rock.