

Massive Search Underway After Fishing Boat Found Empty Off Florida Coast — Two Men Missing at Sea

A large-scale search operation continues in the waters off the coast of **Fort Myers, Florida**, after a fishing vessel was discovered adrift with no one aboard late Friday night. Authorities and family members are urgently searching for **57-year-old Randall Spivey** and **33-year-old Brandon Billmaier**, who vanished during what was expected to be a routine offshore fishing trip.

Mysterious Disappearance Sparks Search Effort

Spivey and Billmaier departed early Friday morning from **Fort Myers** on a **42-foot fishing vessel**, heading out into the Gulf of Mexico for a day of fishing. Relatives expected them to return later that afternoon, but by the evening, no contact had been made and the two men had not returned.

When concerned family members alerted authorities, the **U.S. Coast Guard**, aided by local law enforcement, launched an immediate **search and rescue operation**.

At approximately **1:30 a.m. on Saturday**, the Coast Guard located the pair's fishing boat roughly **70 miles off the Florida coast**. The boat was still running when found, but **both men were missing**.

Empty Boat Found — Still Running

The fact that the vessel was discovered **under power with no one aboard** has raised serious concern among authorities and loved ones. Coast Guard officials noted the boat was in gear, prompting them to dispatch a swimmer to secure the vessel's anchor so it would not drift further.

Because the boat was discovered in this condition — still active and unattended — search efforts have intensified, covering a vast area of open ocean.

Coast Guard and Allied Search Operations

The U.S. Coast Guard is leading the search, deploying both **aircraft and surface vessels**. Efforts have spanned an area about **35 miles in all directions** from where the boat was

located. Aircraft are scanning the surface of the water and the skies up to **5,000 feet in altitude**, while vessels comb the seas for any sign of the missing men.

Officials have also urged pilots and recreational boaters in the region to stay alert and assist where possible, urging them to monitor **marine radio Channel 16** for any updates or requests from search teams.

Descriptions and Last Known Details

To aid in the search, detailed descriptions of both missing men have been released to the public:

- **Randall Spivey**, age 57, is described as a white male approximately **6 ft 1 in tall**, with brown hair and brown eyes. He was last seen wearing **khaki pants and a dark-colored shirt**.
- **Brandon Billmaier**, age 33, is a white male **6 ft 2 in tall** with strawberry-colored hair and brown eyes. Specific details about his clothing at the time of disappearance have not been confirmed by law enforcement.

These descriptions have been shared with regional agencies, and family members are hopeful that increased visibility will lead to new leads.

Family Pleas for Help and Community Involvement

Relatives of Spivey and Billmaier have been vocal about their fear and concern. **Tricia Spivey**, the wife of Randall, described the situation as heartbreaking and has made public appeals for assistance. “We’ve got to find them. Please, please find them,” she said in interviews with local media outlets.

Family members are also urging local boaters to join in the search. In some reports, community volunteers were planning to head out in force — even calling on “the largest armada in the history of Florida’s west coast” to help locate the missing men.

The outpouring of community support reflects the deep concern surrounding this case, with many residents and fellow mariners willing to aid in the search efforts.

Authorities Offer Contact Information for Tips

Officials are appealing for anyone with information — no matter how small — to come forward. Members of the public are asked to contact:

- **U.S. Coast Guard Sector St. Petersburg at 866-881-1392**
- **Lee County Sheriff's Office at 239-477-1000**
- Or call **911** in the event of an urgent tip.

Anonymous tips can also be reported to **SWFL Crime Stoppers**.

Urgent Search Against Time and Conditions

Search and rescue missions of this type are always a race against time. The open waters of the Gulf of Mexico can present challenging and rapidly changing conditions, making it vitally important to locate individuals quickly.

While authorities are using every resource available, including coordinated air, sea, and volunteer support, every hour that passes increases the difficulty of finding those who are missing alive.

Broader Awareness and Safety Reminders

Incidents like this highlight the unpredictable nature of open-water boating and fishing. Even experienced mariners can encounter trouble far from shore, whether due to weather changes, equipment issues, or sudden medical emergencies at sea.

Boating safety experts emphasize the importance of:

- Carrying and wearing **personal flotation devices (PFDs)**
- Maintaining effective communication devices
- Filing a float plan with a responsible party before heading out
- Checking weather forecasts before departure

These precautions can make a critical difference in emergency situations, especially when help is far away or difficult to reach.

Community and Nation Hope for Positive Outcome

As the search continues, family members, friends, and the wider community remain hopeful. Messages of prayers, positive thoughts, and support are spreading across social media, with many urging safe and swift recovery.

The U.S. Coast Guard and allied responders continue their relentless search, demonstrating the dedication and urgency that accompanies every missing-boater call. The nation watches and hopes that **Spivey and Billmaier** will be found safe and brought home to their loved ones.