

Coast Guard Cutter Alert Returns Home After 55-Day Patrol



Coast Guard Cutter Alert (WMEC 630) approaches Naval Air Station Pensacola in Florida, March 28, 2025. Alert's crew conducted a 55-day maritime border security patrol to counter illegal fishing in the Gulf of America. (Copyright-free photo courtesy of Shane Dye)

From the U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area, May 2, 2025

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. – The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Alert (WMEC 630) returned to their home port in Cape Canaveral, Friday, following a 55-day deployment in the Gulf of America.

Alert's crew deployed under tactical command of the Eighth Coast Guard District to counter illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in the region. During patrol, the crew

enforced federal law at sea and defended the United States' Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) by interdicting illegal fishing in U.S. territorial waters.

While underway, crew members conducted law enforcement boardings, which ranged from routine safety inspections to federal fisheries enforcement in order to deter illicit activity such as illegal maritime migration, fishing and smuggling.

On April 20, Alert's crew coordinated with the Coast Guard Cutter Jacob Poroo (WPC 1125) and Coast Guard Station South Padre Island to interdict a lancha with three Mexican fishermen aboard. The fishermen were engaged in illegal fishing north of the U.S. maritime boundary line in the Gulf of America.

Alert's crew also detained four additional Mexican fishermen suspected of illegal fishing after they were transferred aboard the cutter from Jacob Poroo. All seven apprehended Mexican fisherman were later transferred to U.S. Customs and Border Protection for processing.

"I am proud of our crew guarding America's southeastern maritime border, a mission set maintained by the Coast Guard for over 200 years," said Cmdr. Lee Crusius, commanding officer of Alert. "The protection of U.S. sovereign interests throughout the maritime domain has been the staple of our service and this patrol was no exception."

A lancha is a fishing boat used by Mexican fishermen that is approximately 20-30 feet long, with a slender profile, one outboard motor, and capable of traveling at speeds exceeding 30 mph. Lanchas are frequently used to illegally fish in the EEZ near the U.S. - Mexico border in the Gulf of America. The illegal harvest and trade of red snapper and other fish species is often a revenue stream for criminal organizations. Apart from their use for illegal seafood

harvesting in U.S. waters, lanchas may also be used to move illicit drugs and aliens into the United States.

Headquartered in New Orleans, the Eighth Coast Guard District is responsible for U.S. Coast Guard operations spanning 26 states, including the Gulf of America coastline from Florida to Mexico, the adjacent offshore waters and outer continental shelf, as well as the inland waterways of the Mississippi, Ohio, Missouri, Illinois and Tennessee River systems.

Alert is a 210-foot, Reliance-class medium endurance cutter. The cutter's primary missions are counter-drug operations, alien interdiction, enforcement of federal fishery laws, and search and rescue in support of U.S. Coast Guard operations throughout the Western Hemisphere.

Alert falls under the command of U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area, which is based in Portsmouth, Virginia. U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area oversees all Coast Guard operations east of the Rocky Mountains to the Arabian Gulf. In addition to surge operations, they also allocate ships to deploy to the Caribbean and Eastern Pacific to combat transnational organized crime and illicit maritime activity.

For information on how to join the U.S. Coast Guard, visit [Go Coast Guard.com](https://www.uscg.mil) to learn about active duty and reserve, officer and enlisted opportunities. Information on how to apply to the U.S. Coast Guard Academy can be found [here](#).

Coast Guard to Begin Full

Production Activities for PSC Hull 1, LRIP for WCC

From U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters, May 1, 2025

WASHINGTON – The Department of Homeland Security approved full production of the first U.S. Coast Guard Polar Security Cutter (PSC), April 30, 2025. The Service also received approval for low-rate initial production of the the Waterways Commerce Cutter (WCC). This is a significant milestone for the Nation, as it brings the Coast Guard closer to renewing and enhancing operational capabilities in both the American heartland and the polar regions.

Approval for full production enables the Coast Guard and U.S. Navy integrated program office to maintain production momentum, and for the shipbuilder to accelerate hiring to deliver this critical asset as quickly as possible to support national security initiatives. The PSC is the first heavy polar icebreaker to be built in the U.S. in nearly five decades. The Coast Guard is the sole federal agency responsible for icebreaking. Accordingly, the Service must replace, modernize, and grow its fleet of icebreakers to assure U.S. access and sovereignty in the polar regions. The U.S. Coast Guard is committed to working with the Administration and Congress to fulfill the President's direction on icebreaker acquisition.

The production decision for the WCC program entails the first eight hulls of the River Buoy Tender (WLR) and Inland Construction Tender (WLIC) – WCC variants that are being acquired under a single contract, due to significant design and systems commonality. The Coast Guard plans to acquire 16 WLRs and 11 WLICs to recapitalize the Service's aging and increasingly obsolescent inland tender fleet, which supports the Nation's Marine Transportation System, facilitating the

safe movement of over \$5.4 trillion in annual commerce and 30 million jobs. Deliveries of both the lead WLR and WLIC are planned to occur in fiscal year 2027. A third WCC variant, the inland buoy tender, will be acquired under a separate contract.

For over 234 years, the American people have relied on the special authorities and unique capabilities of the Coast Guard to assure the safety, security and stability of America's maritime zones and borders and to foster responsible maritime governance around the world. The PSC and WCC programs demonstrate the breadth of these commitments, and the enduring need for the Coast Guard to deliver vital services the Nation.

Coast Guard Cutter Liberty, Final Island-Class Cutter, Decommissioned After Over 35 Years of Service



From U.S. Coast Guard 17th District, April 30, 2025

ANCHORAGE, Alaska – The Coast Guard decommissioned Coast Guard Cutter Liberty (WPB 1334) during a ceremony in Valdez, Tuesday.

“This decommissioning marks the end of an era for the Coast Guard,” said Cmdr. Jordan Bogosian, a former Commanding Officer of Liberty and the ceremony’s presiding official. “I am proud of Coast Guard Cutter Liberty and her faithful service to our nation for more than three decades.”

Commissioned on December 19, 1989, Liberty was the 34th Island-Class cutter to join the fleet and the final Island-Class cutter to be decommissioned from Coast Guard service.

Liberty is a 110-foot, Island-Class patrol boat, a multi-mission platform that conducted operations to support search and rescue response, marine environmental protection, and national defense.

The Coast Guard is replacing the aging Island-Class patrol boats with Sentinel-Class Fast Response Cutters (FRCs) which feature enhanced capability to meet service needs. There are currently four FRC's homeported in Alaska, with two more scheduled for delivery in the near future.

"It has been a profound honor to serve as the final commanding officer of USCGC Liberty," said Lt. D. Toler Alexander, Commanding Officer of Liberty. "I am incredibly proud of this crew and all they have accomplished. LIBERTY leaves behind a legacy of over 35 years of exceptional service to the people of the United States and the great state of Alaska. I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the communities of Valdez – and Auke Bay before it – for their unwavering support and for being such welcoming homeports to the cutter and her crew."

Coast Guard Cutter Calhoun Seizes Over \$74M in Cocaine Interdicted in Atlantic Ocean



A Coast Guard Cutter Calhoun (WMSL 759) boarding team interdicts approximately 10,000 pounds of cocaine being smuggled aboard a vessel in the Atlantic Ocean, April 13, 2025. (U.S. Coast Guard photo)

From U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area, April 28, 2025

ATLANTIC OCEAN – The crew of U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Calhoun (WMSL 759) seized approximately 10,000 pounds of cocaine, worth an estimated \$74 million in the Atlantic Ocean, April 12-13, 2025.

The seized contraband was the result of an interdiction in international waters in the Atlantic Ocean, and five suspected smugglers remain in U.S. custody pending prosecutorial disposition.

On April 12, the Calhoun, under tactical control of Coast Guard Atlantic Area, detected a suspicious fishing vessel in international waters exhibiting behavior consistent with

narcotic trafficking approximately 1,265 miles west of Las Palmas, Canary Islands. Calhoun's crew launched a cutter small boat and interdicted the suspicious vessel, apprehending five suspected smugglers and seizing approximately 10,000 pounds of cocaine.

"This interdiction demonstrates the Coast Guard's unwavering commitment to combating transnational criminal organizations (TCOs)," said Vice Adm. Nathan Moore, commander, Coast Guard Atlantic Area. "Our dedicated crews, in close coordination with interagency and international partners, continue to disrupt the flow of illicit narcotics, which serves as a critical strategic action that disrupts the financial networks of TCOs, undermining their ability to fund further illicit activities that threaten our communities."

The Coast Guard is the United States' lead federal maritime law enforcement agency with authority to enforce national and international laws on the high seas and waters within U.S. jurisdiction. The Coast Guard continues increased operations to interdict, seize and disrupt transshipments of cocaine and other bulk illicit drugs by sea. These drugs fuel and enable cartels and TCOs to produce and traffic illegal fentanyl, threatening the United States.

Calhoun, which commissioned in 2024, is the newest of four, 418-foot, Legend-class national security cutters homeported in North Charleston, South Carolina. The cutter's primary missions are counter-drug operations and defense readiness.

Calhoun falls under the command of U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area, which is based in Portsmouth, Virginia. U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area oversees all Coast Guard operations east of the Rocky Mountains to the Arabian Gulf. In addition to surge operations, they also allocate ships to deploy to the Caribbean and Eastern Pacific to combat transnational organized crime and illicit maritime activity.

Coast Guard Offloads More than \$214 million Worth of Illegal Cocaine in San Diego



U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Kimball (WMSL 756) crew members, Tactical Law Enforcement Team South, U.S. Coast Guard Maritime Safety and Security Team Los Angeles/Long Beach, Navy, Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron Jacksonville all stand at attention during an all hands event during a drug offload in San Diego April 24, 2025. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Austin Wiley)

From U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Area, April 24, 2025

SAN DIEGO – The crew of the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Kimball (WMSL 756) offloaded approximately 18,898 pounds of cocaine, with an estimated value of more than \$214.3 million, on

Thursday in San Diego.

The offload is a result of six separate suspected drug smuggling vessel interdictions or events off the coasts of Mexico and Central and South America by the Coast Guard Cutter Kimball and Coast Guard Cutter Forward during the months of February through April.

Multiple U.S. agencies, including the Departments of Defense, Justice, and Homeland Security, collaborate in the effort to combat transnational organized crime. The Coast Guard, Navy, Customs and Border Protection, FBI, Drug Enforcement Administration, and Immigration and Customs Enforcement, along with allied and international partner agencies, all play a role in counter-narcotic operations.

The fight against drug cartels in the Eastern Pacific Ocean requires unity of effort in all phases, from detection, monitoring and interdictions to criminal prosecutions by international partners and U.S. Attorneys' Offices in districts across the nation. The law enforcement phase of counter-smuggling operations in the Eastern Pacific Ocean is conducted under the authority of the Eleventh Coast Guard District, headquartered in Alameda, California. The interdictions, including the actual boardings, are led and conducted by members of the U.S. Coast Guard. The Coast Guard continues to increase operations to interdict, seize, and disrupt transshipment of cocaine and other bulk illicit drugs by sea. These drugs fuel and enable cartels and Transnational Criminal Organizations to produce and traffic illegal fentanyl threatening the U.S.

The Coast Guard Cutter Kimball is one of two legend-class national security cutters homeported in Honolulu, Hawaii.

The Coast Guard Cutter Kimball's crew can operate in the most demanding open ocean environments, and the vast approaches of the Southern Pacific, where significant narcotics trafficking

occurs.

Coast Guard Cutter Seneca returns home after 54-day maritime border security patrol in the Windward Passage



Coast Guard Cutter Seneca (WMEC 906) patrols off coastal Haiti, March 1, 2025. The crew of Seneca conducted a 54-day maritime border security patrol in the Windward Passage. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Seaman Solana Laughlin)

From U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area, April 22, 2025

PORTSMOUTH, VA – The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Seneca (WMEC 906) returned to their home port in Portsmouth, April 11, following a 54-day maritime border security patrol in the Windward Passage.

Seneca deployed in support of Homeland Security Task Force – Southeast (HSTF-SE) and Operation Vigilant Sentry (OVS) while underway in the Seventh Coast Guard District’s area of responsibility. Crew members directly contributed to safeguarding America by patrolling U.S. maritime borders and conducting alien interdiction operations.

While underway in the Windward Passage, Seneca’s crew interdicted an unsafe and illegal voyage with 99 aliens on board. A U.S. Customs and Border Protection – Air and Marine Operations aircrew initially detected the vessel. Seneca crew members launched a small boat, interdicting the voyage and transferring the aliens aboard Seneca before their repatriation to Haiti.

During the deployment, Seneca’s crew worked with many partners to include Coast Guard Cutters James (WMSL 754), Vigilant (WMEC 617), Valiant (WMEC 621), Tampa (WMEC 902), the Coast Guard Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron and the Royal Netherlands Navy. Their joint efforts included counter-drug operations and advanced shipborne helicopter training, increasing joint interoperability between interagency and international partners.

“The integrity of our maritime borders is vital to national security, and I am proud of our crew’s hard work and determination throughout this deployment. Their dedicated commitment to deterrence of alien maritime migration saved lives from dangerous ventures at sea while safeguarding our borders,” said Cmdr. Lee Jones, commanding officer of Seneca. “Together with our partner agencies, we were able to effectively enforce United States customs and immigration laws against illegal entry.”

The Coast Guard, along with its HSTF-SE partners, maintains a continual presence with air, land, and sea assets in the Florida Straits, the Windward Passage, the Mona Passage, and the Caribbean Sea in support of OVS. The HSTF-SE combined, multi-layered approach is designed to protect the safety of life at sea while preventing unlawful maritime entry to the United States and its territories.

Seneca is a 270-foot, Famous-class medium-endurance cutter. The cutter's primary missions are alien interdiction, counter-drug operations, enforcement of federal fishery laws, and search and rescue in support of U.S. Coast Guard operations throughout the Western Hemisphere.

Coast Guard Cutter Mustang Decommissioned After Nearly 40 Years of Service



The Coast Guard holds a decommissioning ceremony for Coast Guard Cutter Mustang (WPB 1310) in Seward, Alaska, April 15, 2025. Commissioned on August 29, 1986, Mustang was the 10th Island-Class cutter to join the fleet. (U.S. Coast Guard photo courtesy of USCGC Mustang)

From U.S. Coast Guard 17th District, April 16, 2025

ANCHORAGE, Alaska – The Coast Guard decommissioned Coast Guard Cutter Mustang (WPB 1310) during a ceremony in Seward, Tuesday.

Capt. Christopher Culpepper, the commander of Coast Guard Sector Western Alaska & U.S. Arctic, presided over the ceremony honoring the nearly 40 years of service Mustang and

its crews provided to the nation.

Commissioned on August 29, 1986, Mustang was the 10th Island-Class cutter to join the fleet.

Mustang has been stationed in Seward since it was commissioned, and its crews have since responded to over 200 search-and-rescue cases and completed over 2000 law enforcement sorties.

Mustang is a 110-foot, Island-Class patrol boat, a multi-mission platform that conducted operations to support search and rescue response, marine environmental protection, and national defense.

The Coast Guard is replacing the aging Island-Class patrol boats with Sentinel-Class Fast Response Cutters (FRCs) which feature enhanced capability to meet service needs. There are currently four FRC's homeported in Alaska, with two more scheduled for delivery in the near future.

"The decommissioning of Mustang is a bittersweet moment," said Lt. Gabrielle Troise, Commanding Officer of Mustang. "It's been my honor to be a member of the final crew, and I'm incredibly proud of the legacy we will leave behind within the community of Seward where Mustang has faithfully served since her commissioning."

Coast Guard Cutter Spencer returns home after Operation

**Vigilant
service
upgrades**

**Sentry
life**

**patrol,
extension**



Coast Guard Cutter Spencer (WMEC 905) crew member conduct small boat operations while patrolling the Florida Straits, March 21, 2025. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Haylee Casey)

From U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area, April 14, 2025

PORTSMOUTH, Va. – The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Spencer (WMEC 905) returned to their home port in Portsmouth, Friday, following a 92-day deployment in support of alien interdiction operations in the Florida Straits.

Deployed in support of Homeland Security Task Force – Southeast (HSTF-SE) and Operation Vigilant Sentry (OVS) in the Seventh Coast Guard District's area of responsibility, Spencer's crew conducted search and rescue, and maritime border security operations to support the ongoing U.S. mission to protect the maritime borders of America.

On April 6, Spencer's crew rescued a mariner from a capsized vessel approximately 35 miles northeast of Boynton Beach, Florida. Coast Guard Cutter Margaret Norvell's crew embarked the survivor who was transferred to the Royal Bahamas Defense Force in good condition.

Prior to the patrol, Spencer was part of the service life extension program (SLEP) for two years getting upgrades at the Coast Guard Yard in Baltimore.

"Although our time in Baltimore was challenging, the officers and crew of Spencer were motivated to get the ship ready for operations and embark on our inaugural post-SLEP patrol," said Cmdr. Justin Strock, commanding officer of Spencer. "In support Homeland Security Task Force – Southeast, we provided a clear visible deterrent to anyone considering illegal entry into the country."

Established in 2003, HSTF-SE is the DHS-led interagency task force charged with directing operational and tactical planning, command and control, and functions as a standing organization to deter, mitigate and respond to maritime mass migration in the Caribbean Sea and Florida Straits.

OVS is the 2004 DHS plan that provides the structure for deploying joint air and surface assets and personnel to respond to irregular maritime migration in the Caribbean corridor of the United States. Its primary objectives are to prevent the unnecessary loss of life at sea while deterring and dissuading maritime mass migration alongside our federal, state and local partners.

Spencer is a 270-foot, Famous-class medium endurance cutter. The cutter's primary missions are alien interdiction, counter-drug operations, enforcement of federal fishery laws, and search and rescue in support of U.S. Coast Guard operations throughout the Western Hemisphere.

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USCGC James Returns Home After Multi-Month Patrol, Seizing \$510M in Narcotics



The crew of U.S. Coast Guard Cutter James (WMSL 754) poses for a photo on the cutter's flight deck with contraband interdicted during their 112-day deployment, April 8, 2025. Crew members seized more than 44,550 pounds of cocaine and 3,880 pounds of marijuana valued at approximately \$509.9 million intercepted in the international waters of the Eastern Pacific Ocean. *Photo credit: U.S. Coast Guard | Lt. Weston Fortna*

From U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area

NORTH CHARLESTON, S.C. – The crew of Coast Guard Cutter James (WMSL 754) returned to their home port in North Charleston, Saturday, following a 112-day, multi-phase deployment, where crew members conducted counter-narcotic operations in the Eastern Pacific Ocean and participated in joint exercises with the U.S. Navy in the Atlantic Ocean.

James' crew spent their first two months underway in support of Joint Interagency Task Force – South (JIATF-S) while on patrol in the Coast Guard 11th District's area of operations.

Working alongside additional Coast Guard units and multiagency partners, the crew of James interdicted drug smuggling operations in the vast ocean off the Pacific Coast of Mexico, Central and South America. Crew member efforts significantly disrupted illegal narcotics trafficking with 11 interdictions at sea, seizing more than 48,000 pounds of illicit drugs valued at \$510 million and apprehending 34 suspected drug smugglers.

Of note, crew members interdicted three go-fast vessels in a single day, seizing more than 13,000 pounds of cocaine and capturing nine suspected narco-traffickers.

On Wednesday, James' crew and multiagency partners offloaded the drugs at Port Everglades in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. During a press conference, Attorney General Pamela Bondi and FBI Director Kash Patel delivered remarks alongside U.S. Coast Guard and U.S. Southern Command leadership to highlight the unprecedented collaboration between agencies and importance of preventing these drugs from reaching America.

While deployed, the crew of James partnered with the Ecuadorian Coast Guard to promote regional maritime governance and assist in combatting the international drug trade. For 30 days, James embarked an Ecuadorian Coast Guard officer,

underscoring the success of the two nations' recent bilateral "Agreement Between the United States of America and the Republic of Ecuador Concerning Counter Illicit Transnational Maritime Activity Operations." It was signed in 2023 and entered in force on Feb. 23, 2024. This shiprider provision of the agreement was enacted on four occasions, providing James with additional authorities and a strategic edge in countering suspected drug smugglers, efforts that greatly advanced regional maritime security.

For the remainder of the patrol, James participated in the Carrier Strike Group 12, Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group Composite Training Unit Exercise (COMPTUEX). COMPTUEX is the Joint Force's most complex integrated training event and prepares naval task forces for sustained high-end Joint and combined combat.

COMPTUEX was an all-hands, round-the-clock effort aboard James, especially the Combat Information Center team. Within the exercise, James operated in a contested maritime environment alongside the Navy to meet Fleet Commander requirements. The exercise also presented an opportunity for James to display the Coast Guard's unique capabilities and authorities while operating alongside elements of the Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group, including USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78), USS Winston S. Churchill (DDG 81), Carrier Air Wing (CVW-8), and Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 2.

"The Coast Guard's integration in exercises like COMPTUEX is so important because it simulates realistic threat environments and high-stress situations, allowing members of the Carrier Strike Group to practice complex tactical maneuvers, communication and decision-making under pressure," said Capt. Thomas Rodzewicz, commanding officer of James. "One of the Coast Guard's statutory missions is Defense Readiness. With that comes supporting the National Military Strategy and Department of Defense movements and operations."

JIATF-S, in conjunction with partner nations, works to target, detect and monitor illicit drug trafficking within the joint operating area. The organization facilitates the interdiction and apprehension of illicit traffickers to dismantle transnational criminal organizations while reducing the flow of drugs to the public. Once interdiction becomes imminent, the law enforcement phase of the operation begins, and control of the operation shifts to the U.S. Coast Guard throughout the interdiction and apprehension. Interdictions in the Eastern Pacific Ocean are performed by members of the U.S. Coast Guard under the authority and control of the Coast Guard's Eleventh District, headquartered in Alameda, California.

James is one of four 418-foot, Legend-class national security cutters homeported in North Charleston, South Carolina. The cutter's primary missions are counter-drug operations and defense readiness.

James falls under the command of U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area, which is based in Portsmouth, Virginia. U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area oversees all Coast Guard operations east of the Rocky Mountains to the Arabian Gulf. In addition to surge operations, they also allocate ships to deploy to the Caribbean and Eastern Pacific to combat transnational organized crime and illicit maritime activity.

Sea-Air-Space: U.S., Canada Support Investment to Maintain Arctic Security



Vice Admiral Angus Topshee, commander of the Canadian Navy, right, and Coast Guard Vice Admiral Tom Allan discuss polar security in a changing world. *Photo credit: Seapower magazine*

The U.S. Coast Guard was pleased to hear of President Trump's interest in acquiring as many as 40 new icebreakers, said Coast Guard Vice Admiral Tom Allan, the acting deputy commandant for operations.

"Whenever your boss is interested in 40 icebreakers, you are very happy, right?" he said in response to a question during the April 7 panel on "Demanding Presence in the Poles: How a Good Arctic Strategy is Part of our National Security."

"I mean, this has been something that we've been trying to do for a long time, I'll tell you that," Allan said.

They wouldn't all need to be heavy icebreakers like the aging Polar Star, in service since the 1970s, he said, as studies have shown the Coast Guard wouldn't need more than eight or nine of those. There are smaller ships that could do icebreaking as part of their other functions, and some could

be used on the Great Lakes.

Adding those in, “you get up to that 40 number pretty quick,” Allan said,” because that’s what we need ... to make sure that domestic operations continue and that we are poised to have that presence in the high Arctic and Antarctic. So, I’ll just say it’s very exciting to see your boss point towards a vision that we’ve had for a long time.”

Blue Water and Commercial Activity

The United States and Canada must maintain a strong presence in the poles, especially as warming trends lead to more commercial activity, including shipping and mining, speakers from those nations said during the panel.

Operating in the region is challenging, the panelists said, not only because of ice but also from wind and fog, which can hamper aviation.

“So, having properly equipped vessels, training crews, and most importantly, [having] icebreakers is essential to giving the U.S. assured access to these critical areas,” Allan said.

“We must meet presence with presence, or even better, meet presence with strength. If we aren’t present, others will fill that void, nations whose interests may not align with ours or our allies. Russia controls nearly half of the Arctic, and we’re seeing increased cooperation between Russia and China in this space,” Allan said. “From resource shipments to military operations, we must lead the polar region ... if we fail to act, we’ll be left on the sidelines, watching others shape the future of the region in ways that cannot serve our national interest.”

This is true for Canada as well, said Vice Admiral Angus Topshee, commander of the Canadian Navy.

Canada has made substantial investments in domain awareness in

the region, from over-the-horizon radars to a network of subsurface sensors “designed to make sure we know what’s going on in that region,” he said, which includes adding six ice-breaking warships to its fleet.

The Arctic is remote to Canada as well, he noted. Going from Halifax, Nova Scotia, across the Atlantic and into the Mediterranean is a quicker trip than visiting the Arctic, he said.

“That’s a shorter trip than up into our Arctic. So, for us, it’s an expeditionary theater,” which means working closely with the territorial governments in the region to understand the security challenges they face.

Vice Admiral Doug Perry, commander of U.S. 2nd Fleet, said his fleet was stood up in 2018 “in recognition of there are some real threats that come from the Arctic and through the Arctic,” similar patterns of activity to the Cold War.

“We’re back to needing to be there with persistence today,” Perry said. That includes using space assets and radars for domain awareness and having ships in the region when needed.

“There’s less and less sea ice. There’ll be more and more blue water every day of the year going forward,” he said. “And so, that demands that if we value international freedom of the seas and international rules-based order, if you will, then we actually have to be there and be present and have persistent presence to demonstrate that we will enforce international law” even in some countries illegitimately claim to own particular sea routes.

Perry said seven of the eight Arctic nations are members of NATO, “all of whom are thoroughly invested in Arctic security” and are making investments in their capabilities.