

# 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.”

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**Coast Guard Cutter Spencer  
returns home after Operation  
Vigilant Sentry patrol,  
service life extension  
upgrades**



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.

For information on how to join the U.S. Coast Guard, visit [Go Coast Guard.com](https://www.go.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](#).

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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.

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## **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. 2<sup>nd</sup> 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.

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# Coast Guard Commissions USCGC John Witherspoon in Kodiak, Alaska



The Coast Guard Cutter John Witherspoon (WPC 1158) crew displays signal flags during the cutter's commissioning ceremony at Coast Guard Base Kodiak, Alaska, April 3, 2025. The commissioning marked the first of three fast response cutters scheduled to homeport in Alaska and was presided over by Rear Adm. Megan Dean, commander of the Seventeenth Coast Guard District. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Shannon Kearney)

From U.S. Coast Guard 17th District Public Affairs, Apr. 3 2025

KODIAK, Alaska – The Coast Guard commissioned its newest cutter, Coast Guard Cutter John Witherspoon (WPC 1158) for official entry into its service fleet during a ceremony held in Kodiak, Thursday.

The ceremony was presided over by Rear Adm. Megan Dean, commander of the Seventeenth Coast Guard District. Members of the Witherspoon family were also in attendance, including the cutter's sponsor, Regina Nash, the daughter of John Witherspoon.

The Witherspoon is the 58th Fast Response Cutter (FRC) in the service and the first of three FRCs scheduled to be homeported at Coast Guard Base Kodiak. The crew of the Witherspoon will primarily serve in and around the Aleutian Islands, Bering Sea, Gulf of Alaska, and North Pacific Ocean. The cutter is designed for missions such as search and rescue; fishery patrols; drug and migrant interdiction; national defense; and ports, waterways, and coastal security.

The namesake for the cutter, Capt. John G. Witherspoon, enlisted in the Coast Guard in 1963 and commissioned as an ensign in 1971. During his career, Witherspoon rose to the rank of captain and served as the commanding officer on Coast Guard Cutters Mallow (WLB 396), Valiant (WMEC 621), and Dependable (WMEC 626).

During his tenure, Witherspoon became the first African American to command a medium endurance cutter and the first African American officer to command both afloat and ashore units. He earned both the Coast Guard Meritorious Service Medal and two Coast Guard Commendation Medals during his career.

In honor of his dedication to mentorship amongst Coast Guard personnel, the Coast Guard established the Captain John G. Witherspoon Inspirational Leadership Award, which is given to one active duty officer and one reserve officer each year who

demonstrate Witherspoon's qualities of honor, respect, and devotion to duty.

The Coast Guard has ordered a total of 65 FRCs to replace the 1980s-era Island-class 110-foot patrol boats. The FRCs feature advanced command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance equipment; over-the-horizon cutter boat deployment to reach vessels of interest; and improved habitability and seakeeping.

The commissioning ceremony is a traditional milestone in the life of a cutter that marks its entry into active service and represents the cutter's readiness to conduct Coast Guard operations.

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**U.S. Northern Command  
Maritime Assets Support  
Southern Border Operations**



Members of a U.S. Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment and U.S. Navy Sailors assigned to the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Spruance (DDG 111) conduct small boat operations in the Pacific Ocean, March 26, 2025. (U.S. Navy photo by MCSN Joey Sitter)

01 April 2025

PETERSON SPACE FORCE BASE, Colo. – U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) maritime assets, including the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers USS Spruance (DDG 111) and USS Gravelly (DDG 107), are actively supporting southern border operations at sea in partnership with the U.S. Coast Guard.

Spruance, deployed off the coast of Southern California, recently provided vectoring assistance to U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) Cutter Forrest Rednour (WPC-1129) and Customs and Border Protection Air and Marine Operations interceptor M857 in intercepting a suspect vessel, which resulted in 13 persons taken into custody. Spruance also recently rendered assistance to distressed people when a 35-foot panga was spotted taking on water in international waters, approximately 50 miles

southwest of San Diego. Spruance launched a 7-meter rigid hull inflatable boat crew and rescued 18 individuals, including one U.S. citizen. Watchstanders from Coast Guard Sector San Diego launched a USCG MH-60 Jayhawk, which transported the persons from Spruance to Coast Guard Sector San Diego.

“The US Navy and US Coast Guard partnership on display in the maritime domain highlights our commitment to national security priorities,” said Gen. Gregory Guillot, Commander, U.S. Northern Command. “USS Gravely is currently operating off the coast of Texas, while USS Spruance has been deployed to the coast of Southern California. Their capabilities and the dedication of their crews enable a robust response in combating illegal maritime activities into the United States such as drug and human trafficking. The message here is clear: our resolve to achieve operational control of the border is all-domain, coordinated, and absolute.”

Spruance and Gravely are each accompanied by an embedded U.S. Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment (LEDET). Founded in 1982, Coast Guard LEDETs carry out a variety of maritime interdiction missions, including counter-piracy, military combat operations, alien migration interdiction, military force protection, counter terrorism, homeland security, and humanitarian response.

Spruance, Gravely and their embedded USCG LEDETs bring maritime capabilities to the USNORTHCOM area of responsibility in response to Presidential executive orders and a national emergency declaration and clarification of the military’s role in protecting the territorial integrity of the United States.

USNORTHCOM was named the DoD’s operational lead for the employment of U.S. military forces to carry out President Trump’s southern border Executive Orders. The combatant command continues to support critical DHS capabilities gaps.

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# Coast Guard Increases Presence Near Southwest Border Between U.S., Mexico



Maritime enforcement specialists from Tactical Law Enforcement Team South and U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Kimball (WMSL 756) crewmembers interdict a suspected drug smuggling vessel while patrolling the Eastern Pacific Ocean, March 4, 2025. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Max Hanfland)

**U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Southwest, March 28, 2025**

ALAMEDA, Calif. – The Coast Guard has increased its operational presence near the southwest border between U.S. and Mexico to enhance border security, immigration enforcement and to protect the territorial integrity of the United States.

Coast Guard District Eleven (D11) has expanded its posture from previous steady state counter-illicit-maritime-activities

to gain full operational control of the Southwest Maritime Border.

Since Jan. 21, D11 has tripled its forces operating on the southern border and coordinated Coast Guard surface and air presence with partners to detect, deter, and interdict alien and drug smuggling ventures. D11 diverted aircraft, cutters, small boats and crews under its operational control to the southern border, increasing the illegal alien apprehension rates by 75% with multiple smuggling attempts continuing to occur each night. The Coast Guard remains committed to a persistent operational presence to ensure border security and territorial integrity of the United States.

Irregular maritime migration aboard unseaworthy or overloaded vessels is always dangerous, and often deadly. D11 remains steadfast in its commitment to saving lives and discouraging anyone from taking to the sea in ways that are unsafe and illegal.

D11 has taken immediate actions to increase operational presence and focus to combat illegal fentanyl threatening the United States. In recent years, smuggling ventures across the southern border have been found to include bulk cocaine, methamphetamines, and fentanyl. This trafficking of illegal drugs poses an urgent threat to the American people, and the members of the Coast Guard do everything in their power to interdict drugs before they reach our shores and citizens. Accordingly, the Coast Guard has increased operations to interdict, seize, and disrupt the transshipment of cocaine and other bulk illicit drugs by sea. This includes operations in the Eastern Pacific and the Western Hemisphere Transit Zone, a major highway for illegal smuggling activity. Through sustained counter-narcotics operations, the Coast Guard has imposed billions of dollars of costs on the criminal networks, continuing the fight against corruption and violence fueled by narco-trafficking. Coast Guard law enforcement action and presence is critical to countering the destabilizing impacts

of transnational organized crime. Since January 21, the Coast Guard has interdicted more than 68,800 lbs of cocaine and 4,200 lbs of marijuana totaling nearly \$785 million in wholesale value.

These trends may change due to an influx of Coast Guard assets coupled with Department of Defense (DoD) resources and U.S. Border Patrol in a coordinated effort to protect our southern borders and maritime approaches. U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM) recently deployed two U.S. Navy warships to the southern border to protect the territorial integrity of the United States and support Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Coast Guard operations.

These U.S. Navy warships will operate in direct support of the Coast Guard and carry Coast Guard law enforcement teams that will enable them to conduct border security operations under Coast Guard authorities. As the Coast Guard hardens and sustains its operational posture, including the arrival of these U.S. Navy warships, it is fully integrated with DHS and DoD through NORTHCOM and U.S. Southern Command.

Additionally, D11 is assisting with the national transport of illegal aliens to designated locations in Texas and California, where DoD then transports the aliens internationally for repatriation. The Coast Guard continues to devote its forces from across the nation to support these flights. These combined surface and air operations demonstrate the Coast Guard's continued dedication to control, defend, and secure U.S. borders, territorial integrity, and ensure sovereignty.

D11 plays a crucial role in homeland security and economic prosperity by conducting border security and counter-drug operations to safeguard the integrity of the Southwest Border and its maritime approaches, effectively interdicting, seizing and disrupting drug and alien smuggling at sea.

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# Secretary of Defense Emphasizes Lethality, Deterrence on Guam



From Lt. Cmdr. Michelle Tucker, March 28, 2025

ANDERSEN AIR FORCE BASE, Guam – Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth arrived on Guam March 27 to meet with military and civilian leaders and speak with troops – his first visit to Guam since his January confirmation.

The visit was the second stop on Hegseth’s Pacific engagement tour, which began in Hawaii and will continue from Guam to the Philippines and Japan. Hegseth focused on strengthening alliances and bolstering warrior ethos among service members,

further strengthening the United States' deterrence posture in the region.

More than 600 service members from military commands across Guam gathered for a troop call at Andersen Air Force Base to kick off the visit. Hegseth praised them for their mission contributions, noting Guam's strategic location in the Indo-Pacific region, and charged them to increase lethality and readiness.

"What unites us is who we are and our purpose as Americans," Hegseth said. "We are in the business of warfighting. You are warfighters on behalf of our nation and we are [going to] make sure you have a military built and prepared for that fight ... American leadership ensures the free world is protected – to advance American interests and the interests of our allies."

The visit fell one day after the 80th anniversary of end of the Battle of Iwo Jima that occurred just 750 miles north northwest of Guam. During the troop call, Hegseth recognized a group of seven Iwo Jima veterans who traveled to Guam to attend commemoration events. He thanked them for their courage and fortitude, and for paving the way for Americans in the Pacific.

Commander, Joint Region Marianas Navy Rear Adm. Brent DeVore greeted Hegseth upon arrival along with other senior military leaders on island.

"The Secretary's visit underscored the Department of Defense's commitment to the security of Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, as well as the entire Micronesia region's strategic importance to the Pacific," DeVore said. "We highlighted our efforts and contributions to strategic deterrence, demonstrating U.S. strength and daily preparedness – and tangible examples of ongoing work in cyber security, missile defense, our construction projects throughout Guam,

CNMI, and the COFA states, and infrastructure resilience.”

“We all emphasized the interconnectedness between the Department of Defense efforts and our local communities, in all we do,” he added.

During a military roundtable, Hegseth received briefs from installation commanders and key leaders throughout the region detailing capabilities and future growth on Guam. Commander, 36th Wing, Andersen Air Force Base Air Force Brig. Gen. Thomas Palenske stressed to Hegseth the importance of the work the team is doing on Guam.

“Andersen Air Force Base is incredibly vital to the mission in the Indo-Pacific,” Palenske said. “Our strategic location and the exceptional readiness of our personnel reinforce our commitment to deterrence and combat readiness in the region. The capabilities showcased and discussed during this visit not only empower our forces but also strengthen our alliances and ensure we stand ready to respond to any challenge.”

The “Island Knights” of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 25 flew Hegseth in an MH-60S Sea Hawk helicopter for an aerial tour of the island. During the tour, Naval Facilities Engineering Command Marianas Commanding Officer Navy Capt. Troy Brown briefed Hegseth on current and future construction and resiliency improvements on Guam including the Glass Breakwater, which was damaged during Typhoon Mawar. The breakwater is critical to harbor protection and the supply chain for the entire island.

Finally, Guam Gov. Lou Leon Guerrero, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) Gov. Arnold Palacios, and Guam Rep. James Moylan met with Hegseth to discuss military-civilian partnership from a local perspective.

“Our goal is achieve peace through strength,” Hegseth said.

“By putting America first, that means working with partners and allies throughout the region, reestablishing deterrence and building capabilities right here. These islands are the tip of America’s spear in the Pacific.

“I want to be very clear to everyone in this room,” Hegseth continued. “... Any attack against these islands is an attack against the U.S. We recognize that, we understand that, and we are committed to that.”

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## **U.S. Coast Guard cutter promotes regional security in the Pacific with Papua New Guinea**



East New Britain Province Governor Michael Marum and members from the East New Britian Province government, Papua New Guinea pose with crew from the Coast Guard Cutter Midgett (WMSL 757) on the flight deck in Rabaul, Papua New Guinea March 17, 2025. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Jennifer Nilson)

From U.S. Coast Guard 14th District, March 26, 2025

RABAUL, Papua New Guinea – The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Midgett (WMSL 757) recently concluded its second port call in Papua New Guinea (PNG), following nine days of shiprider operations with representatives from the PNG Defence Force, PNG Customs Service, and PNG National Fisheries Authority.

Midgett was invited by the Papua New Guinea government to participate in the operation. The PNG shipriders led the mission by selecting vessels of interests and conducting boardings while the U.S. Coast Guard provided ship based and shoreside support. The successful shiprider operations

reinforced the importance of deepening and expanding strong bilateral relationships.

During the nine-day operation, Midgett facilitated six at-sea inspections within the PNG Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) under the PNG-U.S. bilateral agreement. The U.S Coast Guard and PNG's bilateral maritime law enforcement agreements enhance PNG sovereignty with the capacity to enforce PNG's maritime laws through shared information exchanges and joint patrols that deter illegal activities and malign behavior in PNG's EEZ.

While in Rabaul, Midgett hosted a key leadership engagement with the East New Britain Governor, Michael Marum, and PNG fisheries stakeholders. During the engagement, members of Midgett and PNG representatives participated in roundtable discussions focused on PNG-U.S. bilateral agreements and security within the PNG EEZ and received a tour of the cutter.

Midgett crewmembers visited a local school to participate in sports and seamanship activities. Midgett also hosted students on board, allowing students to learn about shipboard life and participated in firefighting training.

Commissioned in 2019 and homeported in Honolulu, Midgett is the eighth Legend-class National Security Cutter. At 418-feet, these cutters are the largest and most capable in the U.S. Coast Guard fleet. Equipped with advanced technology, they are ideally suited to support a wide range of missions, including maritime security, law enforcement, and search and rescue operations.

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# Bollinger Shipyards Gets Coast Guard Contract Modification for Polar Security Cutter Program



*Since acquiring the facilities in 2022, Bollinger has nearly tripled its Mississippi production workforce*

From Bollinger Shipyards, March 25, 2025

PASCAGOULA, Miss. – Tuesday, March 25, 2025 – Bollinger Shipyards announced today it has received a \$951.6 million Fixed-Price-Incentive-Firm Target (FPIF) contract modification from the United States Coast Guard, advancing the Detail Design and Construction phase of the Polar Security Cutter (PSC) Program. This milestone underscores Bollinger’s integral role in strengthening America’s maritime presence and

operational capabilities in the Arctic.

“Securing this contract modification has truly been a herculean effort and underscores the incredible trust the U.S. Government has placed in Bollinger to build and deliver the first heavy polar icebreaker in half a century,” said Ben Bordelon, President and CEO of Bollinger Shipyards. “We wouldn’t be in the solid position we’re in today without the leadership and the tireless efforts of the entire team at Bollinger Mississippi Shipbuilding. Their hard work and dedication have successfully put the PSC program on a strong path forward after a rocky start under the previous, foreign-owned builder. We now look forward to receiving the green light to begin full production.”

Bordelon also expressed gratitude for the role of national and state leadership in moving this program forward.

“I am also grateful for the leadership of President Trump and his Administration in recognizing the urgent need for American-made icebreakers. Because of his foresight and commitment to rebuilding America’s shipbuilding capabilities, this historic project is now moving forward.”

Bordelon also acknowledged Mississippi’s leadership for championing the PSC Program and state as a dominant force in shipbuilding.

“I also want to thank Governor Reeves and Mississippi’s Congressional Delegation for their leadership and support, especially as we leverage ongoing state and local investments to ensure Bollinger Mississippi remains the premier example of American shipbuilding.”

“As the Arctic grows as an arena of great power competition, the United States will require far more icebreaking capability from the U.S. Coast Guard to defend our interests in the region. Today’s award is a testament to the good work that Bollinger continues to do on the Polar Security Cutter program

and the growing urgency with which their platforms are needed to boost our national defense,” said U.S. Sen. Roger Wicker (R-MS), Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee. “The Mississippi Gulf Coast will not only benefit from even more national security-focused quality jobs and economic development, but it will also continue to be a national player and powerhouse in mission-critical innovation and military capability.”

“Mississippi continues to prove its status as the premier destination for American shipbuilding—driving both national defense and commercial maritime strength,” said U.S. Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-MS). “This milestone not only reinforces the Gulf Coast’s strategic importance, but it also reflects the value of returning critical shipbuilding programs to experienced, American-owned hands. Under Bollinger Shipyards’ strong leadership and investment, a once-stalled program will move forward with renewed urgency. I fully support this effort, which brings more high-quality jobs to Mississippi and ensures the Coast Guard is able to meet the growing challenges in the Arctic and beyond.”

Bollinger’s continued investment and growth on the Mississippi Gulf Coast reflect the skills, strength and talent of Mississippi’s workforce,” said Mississippi Governor Tate Reeves. “This announcement reinforces Mississippi’s pivotal role in American shipbuilding and solidifies Mississippi’s reputation as a national leader in maritime innovation and excellence.”

“Bollinger Mississippi Shipyards has a strong track record in American shipbuilding, and their role in the Polar Security Cutter program is another important step. This historic milestone strengthens national security, supports the domestic shipbuilding workforce, and enhances our Arctic presence. Ensuring the U.S. Coast Guard has the tools it needs is critical, and I look forward to seeing this project move forward,” said U.S. Rep. Mike Ezell (R-MS-04).

As Bollinger continues to enhance its operations in Mississippi into world-class shipyards, the company remains committed to making strategic investments to modernize and expand its capabilities. Additionally, the contract modification ensures Bollinger continues to provide its workforce with industry-leading wages throughout the life of the PSC program. Since acquiring foreign-owned VT Halter in November 2022, Bollinger has made a significant economic impact in the state through targeted investments and workforce expansion. To date, Bollinger has invested \$76 million across its Mississippi facilities, including Bollinger Mississippi Shipbuilding (BMS), Bollinger Mississippi Repair (BMR), Bollinger Gulfport Shipyard (BGS), and CHAND Gulf Coast.

Since the acquisition in 2022, Bollinger has increased its Mississippi workforce by over 61%, with production roles at BMS alone increasing by more than 178%. These numbers are expected to rise as the program reaches full production over the coming years. A key driver of this growth has been Bollinger's innovative Bootcamp workforce development programs, which continue to strengthen the skilled labor pipeline.

"Our investment in developing the next generation of skilled American workers not only strengthens our competitive edge in the shipbuilding industry but also underscores our commitment to fostering economic growth and American innovation," added Bordelon. "We are committed to providing high-quality careers that positively impact the families and communities we support along Mississippi's Gulf coast."

This contract modification primarily supports operations at Bollinger Mississippi Shipbuilding, with additional project contributions from facilities located in Massachusetts, Illinois, Virginia, Georgia, Louisiana, and other regions. Completion of the first Polar Security Cutter is anticipated by May 2030.

The Polar Security Cutter will provide the United States with enhanced operational capability in polar regions, playing a critical role in safeguarding national security, economic stability, and supporting vital maritime and commercial interests.