

# U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Polar Star Departs Australia, En Route to Antarctica



[Release from U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Area](#)

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Dec. 21, 2023

*Editor's Note: To follow the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Polar Star's Operation Deep Freeze journey, [click here for more imagery.](#)*

HOBART, Australia – U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Polar Star (WAGB 10) and crew departed Hobart, Wednesday, after a four-day port call in Hobart and an earlier stop in Sydney, to begin the

journey across the Southern Ocean en route to Antarctica in support of Operation Deep Freeze 2024.

While in Hobart and Sydney, [the crew hosted tours aboard the Polar Star](#) for guests from the U.S. Embassy including U.S. Ambassador for Australia Caroline Kennedy and members from the Australian government, Royal Australian Navy, Tasmanian government, local industry partners, and local schools and universities.

“A sincere thank you to our Australian hosts and all our international partners whose incredible collaboration has defined the success of Operation Deep Freeze,” said Capt. Keith Ropella, commanding officer of Polar Star. “The cohesion among Antarctic programs reinforces the significance of our joint efforts, fostering a legacy of success for future scientific endeavors in this challenging environment.”

Operation Deep Freeze is a joint military service mission to resupply the United States Antarctic stations of the National Science Foundation, who is the lead agency for the United States Antarctic program (USAP). This year marks Polar Star’s 27th voyage to Antarctica. Every year, a joint and total force team work together to complete a successful Operation Deep Freeze season. Military members from the U.S. Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, and Navy work together through Joint Task Force-Support Forces Antarctica to continue the tradition of providing U.S. military support. Operation Deep Freeze works closely with other Antarctic programs to include those of Australia and New Zealand, as well as those Nations’ respective defense forces.

Leading up to and during the transit, [the crew received training](#) and prepared themselves to support this vital mission despite the austere environment. Operation Deep Freeze is one of the more challenging U.S. military peacetime missions due to the harsh environment in which it is conducted. Antarctica is the coldest, windiest, most inhospitable continent on the

planet, and each trip requires careful planning and coordination.

“Through rigorous training and specialized preparations, our Coast Guard team stands ready for the challenges of Operation Deep Freeze,” said Lt. Cmdr. Don Rudnickas, operations officer of Polar Star. “The Coast Guard’s unwavering commitment underscores our dedication to the success of U.S. missions in the Polar Regions, ensuring the safety and efficacy of our operations.”

The Polar Star provides heavy icebreaking capabilities to facilitate sealift, seaport access, bulk fuel supply, and port cargo handling for three U.S. research stations in Antarctica with McMurdo Station being the largest. The cutter’s icebreaking capabilities enable the safe delivery of critical supplies to sustain USAP’s year-round operations and support international partnership in the harsh Antarctic environment. It’s vitally important that the U.S. maintains a maritime domain presence in Antarctica to protect uninhibited international access to the region.

When the Polar Star deploys in support of Operation Deep Freeze, they routinely spend the holiday season away from home. During the cutter’s first stop in Honolulu, [the crew celebrated Thanksgiving](#) while underway and moored alongside the U.S. Navy fleet at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam in Honolulu.

During the transit across the Pacific, the crew sailed through the position 0 degrees latitude and 180 degrees longitude, also known as “The X” [marking the intersection of the equator and international date line](#). Crossing this exact position is a unique and rare opportunity among Coast Guard crews.

On December 10, the Polar Star moored at HMAS Kuttabul alongside several Royal Australian Navy ships close to the

center of Sydney during a logistics stop for fuel and supplies.

The Polar Star departed its Seattle homeport November 15 and has traveled approximately 7,700 miles with stops in Honolulu, Sydney and Hobart.

The Polar Star is the United States' only asset capable of providing access to both Polar Regions. It is a 399-foot heavy polar icebreaker commissioned in 1976, weighing 13,500 tons, 84-feet wide, with a 34-foot draft. The six diesel and three gas turbine engines produce up to 75,000 horsepower.

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## **USCGC Active Returns Home After Counternarcotics Patrol in Eastern Pacific Ocean**



[Release from the U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Area](#)

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Dec. 20, 2023

PORT ANGELES, Wash. – U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Active and crew returned to its home port, Tuesday, after a 57-day patrol in support of Joint Interagency Task Force-South's (JIATF-S) counternarcotics campaign in the Eastern Pacific Ocean.

Active and crew routinely deploys to this region in an effort to disrupt transnational criminal organizations specifically in pursuit of illegal trafficking of narcotics. Equipped with two boats and an MH-65E helicopter from Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron (HITRON), Active and crew met a variety of mission demands.

Active's crewmembers aided in the rescue of five Ecuadorian fishermen, November 19, who were adrift on their disabled

vessel for an estimated 19 days. The survivors faced harsh elements and prolonged exposure which created life threatening conditions. Active's crew provided medical care and rehydration to the fishermen as they began to recover from their critical condition before transferring them to authorities in El Salvador.

The crew successfully interdicted over 3,400 pounds of cocaine and detained three suspected narcotics traffickers. Less than 24 hours after the holiday interdiction, Active successfully apprehended three more suspected smugglers transporting more than 2,400 pounds of cocaine.

"I am extremely proud of the crew and their relentless pursuit of our mission objectives," said Cmdr. Adam Disque, commanding officer of the Active. "Interdictions at sea are always challenging, and no two are the same. These back-to-back operations were exceptionally well coordinated, which included the tactical employment of an interdiction helicopter, multiple surface boat deployments, and our highly trained boarding teams. The whole crew is always grateful to contribute to the fight against the transnational crime that triggers violence and instability at home."

The Active is a 210-foot medium endurance cutter homeported in Port Angeles, Washington. This multi-mission platform falls under the operational command of the Coast Guard Pacific Area. As a Coast Guard resource, Active deploys in support of the Coast Guard's Eleventh and Thirteenth Districts as well as JIATF-S. Patrolling from northern most part of the contiguous United States, all the way to the equator, Active is a critical asset conducting search and rescue, counter-narcotics law enforcement, living marine resource protection, and homeland defense operations.

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# U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Seizes Illegal Narcotics in Gulf of Oman



[Release from U.S. Naval Forces Central Command Public Affairs](#)

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By U.S. Naval Forces Central Command Public Affairs | December 15, 2023

MANAMA, Bahrain – A U.S. Coast Guard ship seized illegal drugs worth over \$6 million from a fishing vessel in the Gulf of Oman, Dec. 12.

Crewmembers from the Sentinel-class fast response cutter USCGC

Glen Harris (WPC 1144) observed individuals on a fishing vessel throw seven bales of material over the side. The material was discovered to be 174 kilograms of heroin.

Glen Harris arrived in the Middle East region last year and operates from Naval Support Activity Bahrain.

The fast response cutter is part of a contingent of U.S. Coast Guard ships forward-deployed to the region under Patrol Forces Southwest Asia (PATFORSWA). PATFORSWA deploys Coast Guard personnel and ships alongside U.S. and regional naval forces throughout the Middle East.

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**Coast Guard Cutter Diligence returns to Pensacola after interdicting \$20.3 million in illicit drugs, six smugglers**



[Release from U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area](#)

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Dec. 14, 2023

PENSACOLA, Fla. – The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Diligence (WMEC 616) returned to homeport in Pensacola on Thursday after a 52-day counterdrug patrol in the Caribbean Sea.

During the patrol, Diligence's crew worked in support of Joint Interagency Task Force South (JIATF-South) within the Coast Guard Seventh District's area of responsibility to interdict and deter the smuggling of illicit narcotics. Diligence's crew disrupted approximately 700 kilograms of cocaine with an estimated street value of over \$20.3 million dollars and apprehended six suspected smugglers.

Diligence also conducted a joint training exercise with the Army's 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (SOAR). During the exercise, the Diligence crew and pilots from SOAR completed daytime and nighttime helicopter landing evolutions.

This exercise strengthened the interoperability of the Coast Guard and the U.S. Army.

“Stopping the flow of drugs to the United States is a challenging mission that requires a significant amount of teamwork,” said Cmdr. Nolan Cain, Diligence’s commanding officer. “The Diligence crew had the opportunity to work alongside our Department of Defense and international partners in this unified effort. The dedication and hard work of the Diligence crew and our partners is incredibly inspiring.”

Detecting and interdicting illegal drug traffickers on the high seas involves significant interagency and international coordination. JIATF-South in Key West, Florida, conducts detection and monitoring of aerial and maritime transit of illegal drugs. 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 process. Interdictions in the Caribbean Sea are performed by members of the U.S. Coast Guard under the authority and control of the Coast Guard’s Seventh District, headquartered in Miami.

Diligence is a 210-foot medium endurance cutter with 78 crewmembers. The cutter’s primary missions are counterdrug operations, migrant interdiction, enforcing federal fishery laws, and search and rescue in support of Coast Guard operations throughout the Western Hemisphere.

For information on how to join the U.S. Coast Guard, visit [GoCoastGuard.com](https://www.goCoastGuard.com) to learn about active duty, 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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# U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Harriet Lane arrives at new homeport in Pearl Harbor



[Release from U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Area](#)

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Dec. 13, 2023

HONOLULU – U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Harriet Lane (WMEC 903) and crew arrived at its new homeport at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Wednesday, after transiting more than 8,000 nautical miles over 36-days from Portsmouth, Virginia.

The Harriet Lane is U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Area's newest Indo-Pacific support cutter and spent more than 15 months in a Service Life Extension Program (SLEP) in Baltimore, Maryland, to prepare for the transition in missions and operations.

Following reconstitution of the crew in July and returning to Portsmouth in August, the crew went through an extensive dockside period, ensuring the cutter was ready for the transit from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean.

“Re-homeporting U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Harriet Lane is indicative of the Coast Guard’s commitment to the Indo-Pacific – the most dynamic region in the world,” said Rear Admiral Brendan McPherson, deputy commander, U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Area. “Harriet Lane will work by, with, and through allies and partners within the Indo-Pacific region to promote capacity building and model good maritime governance.”

“The crew and I look forward to building partnerships in Oceania to enhance our capabilities, strengthen maritime governance and security while promoting individual sovereignty,” said Cmdr. Nicole Tesoniero, commanding officer of the Harriet Lane. “We plan to build upon many decades of enduring support, operating in concert with the needs of our partners.”

Harriet Lane and crew departed Coast Guard Base Portsmouth, November 2023, and during the transit, the crew conducted trainings for upcoming operations along with professional development for crewmembers. Harriet Lane transited through the Panama Canal, and had port calls in Golfito, Costa Rica and San Diego.

Harriet Lane, commissioned in 1984, is a 270-foot medium endurance cutter now homeported in Honolulu to support Coast Guard missions in the Pacific region. The service’s medium endurance cutter fleet supports a variety of Coast Guard missions including search and rescue, law enforcement, maritime defense, and protection of the marine environment.

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# Coast Guard Cutter Dauntless returns home to Florida after interdicting 19.4 million in illegal narcotics, 3 suspected drug smugglers



[Release from U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area](#)

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Dec. 13, 2023

PENSACOLA, Fla. – The crew of the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Dauntless (WMEC 624) returned to their homeport in Pensacola Tuesday following a 25-day counterdrug deployment in the Caribbean Sea.

While underway in the Coast Guard Seventh District's area of operations and in support of Joint Interagency Task Force-South, Dauntless's crew spent 25 days patrolling the Caribbean, where their primary mission was detecting and interdicting go-fast and other vessels suspected of smuggling illegal narcotics into the U.S.

During the patrol, Dauntless's crew interdicted one go-fast vessel smuggling illegal narcotics, seizing over 670 kilograms of cocaine worth an estimated 19.4 million, and apprehended three suspected drug smugglers.

"This interdiction truly showcased the impressive skill and relentless perseverance of the Dauntless crew," said Cmdr. Aaron Kowalczyk, commanding officer of Dauntless. "Their ability to complete the seizure despite challenging conditions highlights the Coast Guard's important role in countering transnational criminal organizations. The crew's commitment to combating narcotics trafficking is emblematic of their dedication to service."

In addition to interdicting illegal narcotics, Dauntless's crew conducted joint operations with the USS Farragut and its embarked Law Enforcement Detachment to transfer 433 kilograms of illegal narcotics and six suspected traffickers, strengthening interoperability with Department of Defense partners and promoting maritime security and safety.

Dauntless is a 210-foot Reliance-class medium endurance cutter. The cutter's primary missions are counter-narcotics operations, migrant interdiction, living marine resources protection, 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 [www.GoCoastGuard.com](http://www.GoCoastGuard.com) to learn more about active duty and reserve officer and enlisted opportunities. Information on how to apply to the U.S. Coast Guard Academy can be found

at [www.uscga.edu](http://www.uscga.edu).

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# Coast Guard Upgrades Two Detachments to Full Bases

By Richard R. Burgess, Senior Editor

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Coast Guard has upgraded two of its land-based detachments stations to full bases, according to two Coast Guard directives.

The Coast Guard's Operational Logistics Command formally established Base St. Louis, Missouri, in ceremonies held Nov. 30, with Lieutenant Commander John Waters in command, and established Base Borinquen, Puerto Rico, on Dec. 12, with Lieutenant Commander Thomas Kai in command.

The directives noted that each base “provides a new junior command opportunity for the mission support enterprise.”

Base St. Louis will provide support to Coast Guard operations in the Western Rivers and heartland of the United States. Base Borinquen will provide support to Coast Guard operations in the Caribbean Sea and Atlantic Ocean.

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## U.S. Coast Guard Cutter

# Waesche returns home after 89-day counternarcotics patrol in Eastern Pacific Ocean



[Release from U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Area](#)

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Dec. 10, 2023

ALAMEDA, Calif. – Coast Guard Cutter Waesche (WMSL 751) and crew returned to homeport, Saturday, following an 89-day counternarcotics patrol in the Eastern Pacific Ocean.

The 418-foot national security cutter and its crew patrolled more than 19,750 nautical miles conducting law enforcement and search and rescue operations in international waters off

Central and South America.

Waesche deployed with a Jacksonville, Florida, based Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron (HITRON) MH-65 Dolphin helicopter and aircrew, members from Law Enforcement Detachment (LEDET) 101 and 102, and contractors who flew Scan Eagle, an advanced unmanned aircraft system. While conducting flight operations with Air Station San Diego off the coast of San Diego, Waesche's crew received notification from of a mariner 300 nautical miles west of San Diego aboard a disabled sailing vessel with no food in 8-10 foot seas. Waesche diverted from its position to the disabled sailing vessel and launched its Over-The-Horizon (OTH) small boat crew to rescue the survivor and bring him aboard.

Waesche participated in San Francisco Fleet Week 2023, hosting several days of public tours and representing the service during the Parade of Ships event, which involved formation maneuvering with U.S. Navy vessels and rendering honors to the Secretary of the Navy in a pass-in-review.

After departing San Francisco, Waesche began its counternarcotics patrol in the Eastern Pacific, and interdicted five smuggling vessels operating in international waters, deploying the cutter's Over-the-Horizon (OTH) small boats with boarding teams, the Scan Eagle drone, and a helicopter with a precision marksman. Waesche's last interdiction was a self-propelled semi-submersible, resulting in the seizure of 2,510 kgs of cocaine. [Waesche's crew offloaded more than 18,000 pounds of cocaine in San Diego, Wednesday](#), which included two seizures of drug-smuggling vessels made by U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Active's crew.

Waesche is the second Legend-class cutter of the U.S. Coast Guard and is homeported at Coast Guard Island in Alameda, CA. Waesche is 418-feet long with a top speed of 28 knots and a range of 12,000 nautical miles. It is equipped with a flight

deck and hangars capable of housing two multi-mission helicopters and is outfitted with the most advanced command, control, and communications equipment.

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# MULTIMEDIA RELEASE: Coast Guard crew offloads more than \$239 million worth of cocaine in San Diego



[Release from U.S. Coast Guard District 11](#)

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Dec. 6, 2023

SAN DIEGO – The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Waesche (WMSL 751) offloads approximately 18,219 pounds of cocaine, with an estimated street value of more than \$239 million, on Wednesday 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 Cutters Waesche and Active in November.

- USCGC Waesche – 1,550 kg (3,417 lbs) cocaine (Nov. 7)
- USCGC Waesche – 1,309 kg (2,886 lbs) cocaine (Nov. 15)
- USCGC Waesche – 1,140 kg (2,513 lbs) cocaine (Nov. 16)
- USCGC Waesche – 2,510 kg (5,534 lbs) cocaine (Nov. 20)
- USCGC Active – 1,735 kg (3,825 lbs) cocaine (Nov. 23)
- USCGC Active – 20 kg (44 lbs) cocaine (Nov. 24)

The biggest of the six interdictions was the most recent interdiction, occurring Nov. 20, which was an interdiction of a self-propelled semi-submersible (SPSS) carrying more than 5,500 pounds of cocaine. The interdiction of the SPSS was the first in the Eastern Pacific since 2020.

“All four of our interdictions on this patrol are crucial to the Coast Guard’s efforts to keep illicit drugs off the streets, but our last interdiction of a semi-submersible vessel was noteworthy since it was the first semi-submersible interdicted in the Eastern Pacific in over three years,” said Capt. Robert Mohr, commanding officer of the Waesche. “I am extremely impressed with the crew’s dedication throughout this dynamic patrol. They overcame multiple challenges with collective hard work, ingenuity, and positive attitudes to keep us in pursuit of these cartels and their dangerous drugs. A successful patrol like this one is rewarding and leads to

better retention and recruiting efforts because everybody feels a sense of accomplishment.”

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 counternarcotic operations. The fight against drug cartels in the Eastern Pacific Ocean requires unity of effort in all phases, from detection and monitoring to interdictions and criminal prosecutions.

“I am proud of the unity of effort displayed by U.S. Coast Guard members aboard the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Waesche and our partners who stopped these narcotics from entering our Nation through the maritime domain,” said Vice Adm. Andrew Tiongson, commander, U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Area. “Transnational Criminal Organizations threaten security, undermine human rights, erode governance, and result in public health crises throughout the world. The Coast Guard prides itself as a trusted partner, building and maintaining relationships throughout Central and South America that counter the flow of narcotics and save lives both in the United States and abroad.”

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 significance of keeping this much cocaine from reaching our shores and streets is, no doubt, life-changing. Without these 9 tons of cocaine on American streets, fewer people will have access to this toxic poison, and hundreds of millions of dollars will not make it into cartel coffers,” said U.S. Attorney Tara McGrath. “The crew of the Waesche and the entire U.S. Coast Guard is to be commended for protecting our nation from the devastation, violence, and addiction that cocaine brings to our communities.”

The Waesche is one of four Legend-class national security cutters homeported in Alameda, California. National security cutters can operate in the most demanding open ocean environments, including the hazardous fisheries of the North Pacific and the vast approaches of the Southern Pacific, where a large amount of narcotics traffic occurs. With robust command, control, communication, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance equipment, stern boat launch and aviation facilities, as well as long-endurance station keeping, the national security cutters are afloat operational-level headquarters for complex law enforcement and national security missions involving multiple Coast Guard and partner agency participation.

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## **Coast Guard to SLEP, Expand MH-60T Helicopter Fleet as Sikorsky Delivers First New**

# Airframe



Sikorsky delivered the first of 45 new airframes to the Coast Guard for the service-life extension of the service's MH-60T helicopter fleet.

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By Richard R. Burgess, Senior Editor

ARLINGTON, Va.—The U.S. Coast Guard has confirmed plans to expand its MH-60T Jayhawk helicopter fleet and make it the standard service-wide helicopter. The service life-extension of the current MH-60T fleet is being highlighted as Sikorsky, a Lockheed Martin company, delivers the first of 45 replacement MH-60T airframes to the Coast Guard.

Sikorsky on Nov. 30, 2023, delivered the first new “hull,” as the airframe is called, which consists of the nose, cabin, and aft transition structure, combined as a single assembly, Sikorsky said in a release. Upon delivery, the new hull will be used to rebuild an older MH-60T with new and updated components by the Coast Guard's Aviation Logistics Center (ALC) in Elizabeth City, North Carolina starting in December 2023.

The Coast Guard's MH-60T fleet, the first of which originally began service as an HH-60J in 1990, is approaching the end of its service life of 20,000 hours per aircraft, with a current average of 16,000 flight hours per aircraft.

During the SLEP of 45 MH-60Ts, "the Coast Guard ALC will remove all dynamic (moving) components, digital cockpit, mission systems, and engines, then rebuild each aircraft around an all-new airframe," Sikorsky said, noting that the company's Troy, Alabama, facility is the site of the hull manufacture.

Sikorsky President Paul Lemmo told reporters at a Nov. 30 teleconference that the new hulls would be identical to those in the HH-60Js delivered between 1990 and 1996, but also would receive an anti-corrosion sealant in the joints.

The Coast Guard awarded Sikorsky a \$374 million contract to deliver all 45 MH-60T airframes to the ALC at a rate of 12 per year through 2027. Full-rate production will begin with fabrication of the fourth hull. The MH-60Ts going through SLEP will retain their Coast Guard serial numbers.

Rear Adm. Michael Campbell, Coast Guard director of Acquisition Programs and program executive officer, also speaking at the teleconference, said that the Jayhawk fleet went through an earlier SLEP during which the airframe life was extended from 10,000 to 20,000 flight hours. He said that without the SLEP the MH-60T fleet would have to be grounded by 2028. With the current SLEP, the MH-60T fleet would serve into the late 2040s.

The first MH-60T with the new hull is expected to fly in June at the ALC.

The Jayhawks are put through overhaul every four years, with six in overhaul at any given time.

The Coast Guard currently operates 48 MH-60Ts, three of which

will not receive the new hulls under this program because they were re-built with ex-U.S. Navy SH-60F or HH-60H helicopters. Some of the 45 Jayhawks receiving the new hulls also are ex-U.S. Navy H-60s that were re-built as Jayhawks.

According to the Coast Guard, the H-60 Jayhawk medium range recovery helicopter fleet has saved more than 11,900 lives during more than 48,300 search and rescue missions since 1990, accumulating more than 730,430 flight hours," Sikorsky said in the release.

Campbell said the Coast Guard plans to increase the size of its Jayhawk fleet because of the capabilities of its national security cutters and forthcoming offshore patrol cutters and polar security cutters to hangar H-60 helicopters. The rotors and tail rotor boom of the MH-60T can be manually folded, but the rotors of the Navy H-60s have the capability to be electrically folded. The Coast Guard plans to install the electrical fold capability beginning in 2024.

The Coast Guard also plans to replace its fleet of 98 MH-65 Dolphin helicopters with MH-60Ts.

"The Coast Guard is moving forward with plans to transition the service's rotary wing fleet to a standardized, single-platform fleet of MH-60Ts," said Loretta Haring, Office of Strategic Planning and Communication (CG-925) Acquisition Directorate, in an email to reporters. "The Service plans to operate 127 airframes nationwide and intends to source the additional MH-60T hulls (termed "fleet growth") through a combination of both newly manufactured hulls and Navy conversion hulls. The number of each to be used has not yet been determined. The initial phase of fleet growth likely will be 36 hulls."