

Coast Guard Commissions Icebreaker Storis in Juneau



The Coast Guard Cutter Storis in Juneau for its commissioning as the nation's newest Arctic icebreaker. *Photo credit: Craig S. Neus*

JUNEAU, ALASKA— On Saturday, Aug. 10, U.S. Senator Dan Sullivan (R-Alaska) and Admiral Kevin Lunday, acting commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard, participated in the commissioning ceremony of the United States Coast Guard Cutter Storis (WAGB 21) in Juneau.

Storis, the renamed and reconditioned former commercial icebreaker Aiviq, is the country's first new icebreaker in a quarter century. Sullivan has championed the effort to build

new American icebreakers and to procure commercially available icebreakers, and to homeport them in Alaska in order to close the icebreaker gap in the Arctic.



News reporters on the bow-mounted helicopter pad aboard USCGC Storis. *Photo credit: Craig S. Neus*

“Storis adds vital capability to the U.S. polar icebreaker fleet at a critical time, when our adversaries are expanding their activities in and near U.S. waters, and the challenges and threats we face as a nation are growing more complex every day,” Lunday said at the ceremony.

“With the arrival of the Storis to its new homeport in Juneau, we mark not just the commissioning of a vessel, but a strategic milestone in America’s Arctic future,” Sullivan said. “This ship is an investment in real capability, real people, and a real presence in the region that defines the next chapter of global security, commerce, and energy. The homeporting of the Storis right here in Juneau sends a clear

and deliberate message: The United States is an Arctic nation, Alaska is an Arctic state, and the United States Coast Guard is a capable and growing Arctic force.”



Members of the public and press visit Storis the weekend of its commissioning. *Photo credit: Craig S. Neus.*

The recent One Big Beautiful Bill, signed into law July 4, included \$300 million to support the shoreside infrastructure needed for Storis' homeporting. Until that is complete, Storis will be temporarily berthed in Seattle, Washington, with the Coast Guard's two other polar icebreakers.

“The United States is an Arctic nation, and it is so because of the great state of Alaska,” Lunday said.

The United States' only operational heavy icebreaker, the 1970s-era Polar Star, is undergoing repairs in California and the Coast Guard's medium icebreaker Healey is returning to

homeport for repairs after an engine fire. Meanwhile, Sullivan said, Russia has 55 icebreakers and is building more and by 2025, China, which has no sovereignty over any Arctic waters, is set to surpass the United States' icebreaker fleet.



A view of the Storis' bridge. The ship is crewed with a hybrid crew consisting of military cuttermen and civilian mariners. *Photo credit: Craig S. Neus*

"If we're not ready to lead in the Arctic, others will, and they'll be happy to do it for us," Sullivan said. "That's why the Storis is so important."

Lunday said the recent funding bill also funds the beginning of a new generation of icebreakers for the service.

"This is a remarkable moment because it doesn't happen very often, but it's going to be happening a lot more," Lunday said of the commissioning.