

Coast Guard Cutter Returns Home after Encounter with Chinese, Russian Naval Ships



Petty Officer 2nd Class Matthew Nichols observes the sunset aboard the Coast Guard Cutter Kimball (WMSL 756), in the Bering Sea, during its patrol. The Kimball, homeported in Hawaii, completed a 19,000 mile deployment in the Chukchi and Bering Seas, operating as part of Operation Frontier Sentinel.
U.S. COAST GUARD

HONOLULU – The Coast Guard Cutter Kimball (WMSL 756), which encountered a formation of Russian and Chinese naval ships near Alaska in September, returned to its Honolulu homeport, Oct. 28, the Coast Guard Pacific Area said in an Oct. 29 release.

The Kimball and its crew covered more than 22,000 miles in

over 100 days, conducting search and rescue and fisheries enforcement patrols in the Bering and Chukchi Seas, earning the ship's first Coast Guard Arctic Service Medal.

While on routine patrol, the vessel encountered a group of [Russian and Chinese naval ships in the Bering Sea](#). The formation, which was transiting through the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone, did not enter U.S. territorial waters. The Kimball came within about a mile of the naval ships, established and maintained radio contact and ultimately ensured their presence was in accordance with international rules and norms.

"As Arctic sea ice melts, Coast Guard presence in the region is vital to ensuring the safety of increased maritime traffic, protecting critical resources such as fish stocks, and upholding U.S. sovereign interests and international law," said Capt. Thomas D'Arcy, Kimball's commanding officer. "It was an honor to lead Kimball's crew during this patrol, and we're proud to contribute to a long legacy of essential Coast Guard presence in the Bering Sea and the Arctic."

Kimball's crew also monitored fishing vessel safety standards and preserved living marine resources within the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone by enforcing applicable laws and regulations. Kimball's crew patrolled both sides of the U.S. – Russia Maritime Boundary Line and conducted multiple boardings inspecting U.S. commercial fishing vessels, including one fishing vessel that has operated for 109 years.

Additionally, Kimball's crew [supported a long-range helicopter medical evacuation](#) of an injured crewmember aboard a bulk carrier ship, and supported a proof-of-concept trial that involved operating larger helicopters on national security cutters. Air Station Kodiak aircrews coordinated efforts with Kimball's crew, resulting in the first overnight deployment of a Coast Guard MH-60 Jayhawk helicopter on a national security cutter in the Arctic.

The Kimball's ship and aircrews made multiple visits to remote island and coastal communities, where crew members performed community service and outreach events, reinforcing the Coast Guard's commitment to the communities it serves.

"It was an extremely rewarding experience to serve aboard Kimball for this unique arctic patrol," said Ens. Emma Simms, a Kimball junior officer. "I was able to participate in a variety of Coast Guard missions in a single patrol, ranging from conducting fisheries boardings to search and rescue to defending sovereign interests."

Commissioned in 2019, Kimball is the Coast Guard's seventh national security cutter. National security cutters are 418-foot-long, 54-foot-wide and have a displacement of 4,600 long-tons. With a range of 13,000 nautical miles, the advanced technologies of this class are designed to support the national objective to maintain the security of America's maritime boundaries and provide long-range search and rescue capabilities.