

Coast Guard National Security Cutter Returns to CA Following 130-Day Bering Sea Patrol



Coast Guard Cutter Bertholf (WMSL 750) transits through Glacier Bay, Alaska, Oct. 24, 2024. During the patrol, Bertholf's crew operated as far north as the Arctic Circle, patrolling along the maritime boundary line between the United States and Russia and supporting U.S. strategic interests in the North Pacific Ocean. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Troy Spence.)

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ALAMEDA, Calif. – The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Bertholf (WMSL 750) and crew returned to Alameda Friday, after completing a 130-day deployment patrolling the Bering Sea.

The Bertolf's crew showcased how the U.S. Coast Guard is a unique instrument of national power that bridges the divide

between defense, diplomacy, and law enforcement and creates opportunities to further national objectives and priorities.

During the patrol, Bertholf's crew operated as far north as the Arctic Circle. They provided U.S. maritime presence in the region patrolling along the maritime boundary line between the United States and Russia and supported U.S. strategic interests in the North Pacific Ocean by promoting maritime governance, enforcing domestic fishery regulations, and strengthening U.S. presence along the maritime boundary line.

Bertholf conducted joint operations in the region with the Coast Guard Cutter Healy (WAGB 20) and an Air Station Kodiak MH-60 helicopter aircrew, enhancing collaboration and improving capabilities across the national security cutter and polar icebreaker mission sets.

While patrolling the region, Bertholf's crew conducted 24 boardings of commercial fishing vessels, enforcing safety and living marine resource regulations.

The crews worked closely with National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration law enforcement officers and Alaskan Wildlife State Troopers, notably conducting two boardings of foreign flagged tramper vessels. The Coast Guard's efforts in ensuring safe and sustainable fishing practices are essential to the long-term health of this vital renewable resource, and the security of the United States.

Bertholf's crew provided search and rescue (SAR) coverage of the Bering Sea showcasing the national security cutter and crew's multi-mission agility. The crew responded to a disabled fishing vessel 80 nautical miles northeast of Dutch Harbor, Alaska. The fishing vessel Seabrooke had lost all electrical power, including navigation equipment and steering as a significant storm was approaching their position. Bertholf arrived on scene and placed the disabled vessel in tow using a

bridle that Bertholf's crew handcrafted. Bertholf was relieved of the tow by commercial salvage vessel Makushin Bay who towed the disabled vessel safely into port at Akutan, Alaska.

"This crew excelled in one of the most challenging maritime environments through the holiday season, safeguarding U.S. fishermen, engaging with local communities, and delivering comprehensive search and rescue coverage across the Bering Sea," said Capt. Billy Mees, Bertholf's commanding officer. "I hold the entire crew, along with their families, in the highest regard for the sacrifices they make to serve our country."

To maintain and enhance SAR proficiency, Bertholf's crew conducted 46 helicopter deck landings with a U.S. Coast Guard Air Station Port Angeles HH-65 helicopter aircrew while operating in the Strait of Juan de Fuca. Bertholf also conducted flight operations with Air Station Kodiak's MH-60 helicopter aircrews operating near Cold Bay, Alaska. Coordination of flight operations provided critical training opportunities for both helicopter crews and Bertholf's crew, supporting Bertholf's ability to respond to emergencies.

Bertholf crew members fostered relationships while in port Juneau and Adak, Alaska with community relations engagements. They met with city leadership and devoted several hours to cleaning out the local tsunami shelter and engaging with the local population, less than 30 of whom were currently on the island, aiding in the service's understanding of the Aleutian community and how to optimize support for remote Alaskan communities.

Bertholf began the patrol representing the Coast Guard by participating in San Francisco's 2024 Fleet Week. The crew provided ship tours to over 2,500 visitors over a three-day period and sailed in formation during the parade of ships. The crew showcased their capabilities and commitment to the

community through various public engagements including recruiting booths, Coast Guard Museum displays, and collaborations with other Coast Guard units across the Bay Area.

“We were honored to be a part of San Francisco Fleet Week – the Coast Guard is the largest branch of service in the Bay Area, and we were thrilled to interact with the community in this time-honored event.” said Mees.

Bertholf is named for Commodore Ellsworth Price Bertholf, the Coast Guard’s first commandant. Bertholf’s most notable service was his role in the famous Alaska Overland Expedition in 1897. When over 200 American whalers became trapped in ice at Point Barrow, Bertholf led the relief party traveling 1,600 miles via dogsled. Along with Lt. David Jarvis and Dr. Samuel Call, Bertholf herded almost 400 reindeer through a frozen Alaska winter to feed the starving whalers, an act that would later earn him the Congressional Gold Medal. The ship’s motto is “Legends Begin Here.”

Homeported in Alameda, Bertholf was commissioned on August 4, 2008, as the Coast Guard’s first Legend class national security cutter. National security cutters are 418-feet long, 54-feet wide, and have a 4,600 long-ton displacement. They have a top speed of 28 knots, a range of 12,000 nautical miles, and can hold a crew of up to 170. Bertholf routinely conducts operations throughout the Pacific, where the cutter’s combination of range, speed, and ability to operate in extreme-weather conditions provides the mission flexibility necessary to conduct vital strategic missions.

The U.S. Coast Guard provides service to the American people. As part of the Department of Homeland Security team, Coast Guard men and women protect our nation and are at all times a military service—part of the joint force defending it.