

Coast Guard Secures the U.S. Arctic as Chinese Research Vessels Arrive in the Bering Sea



JUNEAU, Alaska – This week, the U.S. Coast Guard monitored the Chinese research ship Xue Long, which transited north through the U.S. exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and over the U.S. extended continental shelf in the Bering Sea with a declared destination of the Arctic and the Xue Long 2, another China-flagged research vessel transiting to the Arctic.

For the first time this year, Chinese vessels were tracked transiting through the U.S. EEZ and over the U.S. extended continental shelf (i.e., continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles of shore) in the Bering Sea. In response, the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Munro (WMSL 755) executed Operation Frontier

Sentinel to actively monitor the vessels during their northbound transit. This operation is designed to protect American sovereign rights, ensure consistency with international law, and position the Coast Guard to rapidly respond to any detected malign activity.

While foreign vessels are permitted to operate within the U.S. EEZ and over the U.S. extended continental shelf in accordance with international law, the Coast Guard remains vigilant to ensure their activities comply with established international law. In particular, conducting marine scientific research within the U.S. EEZ and/or on the U.S. extended continental shelf would require advance permission from the United States and subsequent sharing of information collected.

In recent years, the Coast Guard has observed heightened activity in the U.S. Arctic and anticipates continued and increased presence in the region this summer.

“Alongside the Department of War, the Department of State, and our international partners, we are actively responding to competitor activities across an increasingly contested Arctic,” said Rear Adm. Bob Little, commander U.S. Coast Guard Arctic District.