

Cutter Healy Gets Underway for Months-Long Arctic Patrol



Coast Guard Cutter Healy underway. U.S. Coast Guard
SEATTLE – U.S.

Coast Guard Cutter Healy (WAGB-20) departed for a months-long deployment to the Arctic Ocean on July 22, the Coast Guard Pacific Area said in a release.

The cutter will support multiple science missions as well as Operation Arctic Shield, the service's annual operation to execute Coast Guard missions, enhance maritime domain awareness, strengthen partnerships and build preparedness, prevention, and response capabilities across the Arctic domain.

As the nation's primary maritime presence in the polar regions, the Coast Guard advances U.S. national interests through a unique blend of polar operational capability, regulatory authority, and international leadership across the full spectrum of maritime governance.

Earlier this year the Coast Guard released the Arctic Strategic Outlook, reaffirming the service's commitment to American leadership in the region through partnership, unity of effort, and continuous innovation.

"While we

focus our efforts on creating a peaceful and collaborative environment in the Arctic, we're also responding to the impacts of increased competition in this strategically important region," Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Karl Schultz said.

"Our continued presence will enable us to reinforce positive opportunities and mitigate negative consequences today and tomorrow."



A crewmember aboard Healy handles a line in preparation to get underway from their pier in Seattle on July 22. Healy is one of two Coast Guard icebreakers and is the only military ship dedicated to conducting research in the Arctic. U.S. Coast Guard/Petty Officer 2nd Class Steve Strohmaier

The Coast

Guard has been a leader in the Arctic for over 150 years and the sole provider

of the nation's polar icebreaking capability since 1965. Presently, the Coast

Guard maintains two icebreakers – Healy, a medium icebreaker, and Polar Star, the only heavy U.S. icebreaker.

While the

Healy deploys annually to the Arctic, the 43-year-old Polar Star is the only

cutter capable of supporting Operation Deep Freeze, the annual mission to

maintain U.S. presence in Antarctica.

If a

catastrophic event, such as a shipboard fire or getting stuck in the ice, were

to strand the Healy in the Arctic or the Polar Star near Antarctica, the Coast

Guard is left without a self-rescue capability.

By

contrast, Russia currently operates more than 40 icebreakers – several of which are nuclear-powered.

The Coast

Guard is seeking to increase its icebreaking fleet with six new polar security cutters (PSC) to ensure continued national presence and access to the polar regions.

“The polar security cutters will support the full range of Coast Guard missions, to include search and rescue, law enforcement, environmental response, and national defense,” said Vice Adm. Linda Fagan, the Coast Guard’s Pacific Area commander. “This investment will enable America to project presence in the polar regions.”

In April, the Coast Guard awarded VT Halter Marine Inc. of Pascagoula, Mississippi, a contract for the design and construction of the Coast Guard’s lead PSC, which will be homeported in Seattle. The contract also includes options for the construction of two additional PSCs.