Polar Star Returns Home After Six Months in Dry Dock

SEATTLE — The Coast Guard cutter Polar Star arrived home Oct. 17 following a six-month maintenance period at Mare Island Dry Dock in Vallejo, California, the Coast Guard Pacific Area said in a release.

The 42-year-old icebreaker received extensive repairs and upgrades to engineering and electronic systems while completing the dry dock availability at Mare Island for the second time in as many years.

“We successfully accomplished an annual dry dock availability valued at over $7.6 million,” stated Lt. Cmdr. Chris Pelar, Polar Star’s engineering officer. “More than 50 work items were completed while in dry dock. We will complete remaining maintenance requirements in Seattle before departing for our upcoming Antarctic deployment.”

Polar Star received extensive overhauls to equipment, most notably in auxiliary systems, generator upgrades and replacing propellers in preparation of supporting Operation Deep Freeze (ODF) 2019, the U.S. military’s contribution to the National Science Foundation managed U.S. Antarctic Program.

Polar Star, the nation’s only operational heavy icebreaker, deploys annually to Antarctica in support of ODF. The 399-foot, 13,000-ton cutter and crew transit through the Ross Sea and forcibly break through ice up to 21-feet thick clearing a path through frozen waters for supply ships to reach Antarctica’s logistics hub, McMurdo Station, Scott-Amundsen South Pole Station and other international bases. The critical supply deliveries allow the stations to stay operational year-round, including during the dark and tumultuous winter.

The Coast Guard has been the sole provider of the nation’s

polar icebreaking capability since 1965 and is essential to ensuring national presence and access to the Polar regions.