USCGC Sequoia Returns to Guam from Patrol

HONOLULU – The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Sequoia (WLB 215) returned on Feb. 25 to Apra Harbor, Guam, following a multicutter patrol in response to Super Typhoon Wutip, the Coast Guard 14th District said in a Feb. 28 release.

Wutip was the strongest February storm in the Western Pacific Ocean in 70 years. While underway, the Sequoia led a typhoon avoidance group with the two 110-foot Island Class Patrol Boats from Guam.

“Our mission is two-fold in a situation like Typhoon Wutip,” said Lt. Cmdr. Christian Adams, Sequoia’s commanding officer. “The first is to protect our response capabilities during the storm and conduct emergency search and rescue. This allows us to complete our second mission, to assist in response efforts following the storm’s passing.”

Before the typhoon, Sequoia’s crew was one of the few Coast Guard units underway during the recent government shutdown. Leaving Guam in early January, they traveled over 8,146 statute miles (7,079 nautical miles) to conduct aids to navigation maintenance and replacement in American Samoa and Kwajalein Atoll.

The care of aids to navigation (ATON) is a vital service the crew of the Sequoia provides to the Western Pacific. Their mission ties directly into the commandant’s Maritime Commerce Strategic Outlook released last year. As a maritime nation, the upkeep of ATON ensures commerce continues safely and ensures remote places like American Samoa have access to an ever-expanding world economy. While on patrol the Sequoia crew worked nine floating aids and 11 fixed aids, including three navigation ranges. These are buoys and day boards assisting

mariners in the navigation of a free and open Indo-Pacific.

Sequoia’s primary roles have been to assist our partners in the Pacific in the care of their ATON and, through joint fisheries boardings, enforce conservation and management measures established by the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission. This allows maritime nations in the region to conserve commercial fish stocks and ensures this vital resource remains sustainable for years to come. Due to operations and scheduling this patrol focused on ATON and training in small boat evolutions and buoy deck operations roles. The crew overcame several challenges, including communications issues, engine temperatures and deck equipment.

“I’m proud of this crew for rising to the occasion and completing the mission in an area that is not normally part of our responsibility offering such a complex supply chain,” Adams said.

As a maritime service, the Coast Guard participates in many traditions, some dating back centuries. During the patrol, the cutter made a crossing at the intersection of the Equator and International Dateline and partook in the time-honored tradition of

inducting 36 crewmembers as “Golden Shellbacks.” During a ceremony, the new Golden Shellbacks received a certificate commemorating the event.

“As with all seafarers, there are certain milestones we celebrate as unique and worthy of remembrance honoring our nautical traditions,” Adams said. “Being a Golden Shellback is a fun, unofficial way to celebrate our growth as mariners.”

This patrol aligns with the District 14 plan to provide for continued safety of navigation during the anticipated gap in buoy-tender coverage in the Pacific associated with the midlife maintenance schedule for the 225-foot sea going buoy tenders fleetwide.