U.S. Coast Guard’s Newest Polar Icebreaker Returns to Seattle Following 36-Day Deployment



USCGC Storis (WAGB 21) sits hove to in the ice while conducting ice liberty for the crew in the Bering Sea, April 17, 2026. The patrol focused on advancing operational readiness, strengthening interoperability with other military assets, and testing new concepts to support prolonged operations in one of the world’s most demanding and austere maritime environments. (U.S. Coast Guard courtesy photo.)

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SEATTLE – The crew of the U.S. Coast Guard’s newest polar icebreaker, the USCGC Storis (WAGB 21), returned to their

temporary Seattle home port Monday after a 36-day deployment to the Bering Sea.

The patrol focused on advancing operational readiness, strengthening interoperability with other military assets and testing new concepts to support prolonged operations in one of the world's most demanding and austere maritime environments.

Amid increased global focus on the Arctic, Storis' deployment demonstrates the enhanced capability and commitment to securing maritime borders and protecting U.S. sovereignty and natural resources to safeguard national interests.

Acquired and **commissioned in 2025**, Storis is the first polar icebreaker commissioned by the Coast Guard in more than two decades. A primary mission for the cutter and its crew during this deployment was conducting an ice assessment to establish baseline performance in a range of Arctic conditions. The crew evaluated the cutter's full icebreaking capabilities, with data gathered serving as a benchmark to inform future operations for U.S. and allied vessels navigating high-latitude environments.

The ice assessment and operational exercises are integral to the crew's preparation for their scheduled summer deployment.

"Operating the Storis in the extreme conditions of an Arctic winter is a clear statement of our nation's resolve," said Capt. Corey Kerns, commanding officer of Storis. "Storis represents a critical bridge to our future icebreaker fleet. This mission is about preparation, rigorous training and asserting the continued importance of the Arctic to our nation."

To demonstrate U.S. operational capability in the high latitudes, Storis conducted a joint passing exercise with the Legend-class national security cutter USCGC Waesche (WMSL 751). The exercise took place in challenging winter conditions less than a mile from the ice edge, with visibility limited

to 150 yards.

Storis and Waesche also executed a proof-of-concept fueling evolution in Dutch Harbor, Alaska. This logistical demonstration expanded Storis' operational flexibility for future deployments. By establishing cutter-to-cutter refueling capability, Storis can extend an asset's time on station, maximizing operational reach while reducing the need for long transits back to port for logistics.

The crew conducted advanced ice rescue training during the deployment, practicing complex life-saving maneuvers in unforgiving Arctic conditions to prepare for high-risk search and rescue missions in ice-covered waters. This hands-on training ensures the Coast Guard can effectively respond to emergencies and protect mariners operating in harsh environments.

To ensure maximum readiness in a rapidly evolving geostrategic environment, the crew also conducted a gunnery exercise. Operating in the Arctic presents unique defense challenges, and the live-fire exercise provided essential hands-on training for the ship's weapons teams. By honing marksmanship and weapons system proficiency, the crew reinforced the Coast Guard's role as an armed service capable of defending national security interests and responding to emerging maritime threats.

Storis is a 360-foot medium icebreaker with a displacement of nearly 15,000 tons. Powered by four diesel engines generating 22,500 horsepower, the cutter can navigate through three feet of ice at five knots, adding crucial capability to the Coast Guard's Arctic operations.

Storis joins the cutters Healy (WAGB 20) and Polar Star (WAGB 10), augmenting the Coast Guard's presence in the high latitudes and underscoring the United States' commitment to Arctic security and stewardship. Storis is a multi-mission

capable asset equipped to support logistics, search and rescue, ship escort, environmental protection, and enforcement of laws and treaties in the region.