

CHRONOLOGY OF U.S. COAST GUARD POLAR AND ICE OPERATIONS

- 1867- United States acquires the Alaskan Territory from Russia
- after the purchase USRC *Lincoln* carried the U.S. delegation for the transfer ceremony
-the Revenue Cutter Service becomes the presence of the Federal Government in the new territory including the transportation of judges, marshals, prisoners, and witnesses; conduct of courts; enforcement of customs and immigration statutes; and enforcement of laws related to fisheries and wildlife.
- 1868- USRC *Wayanda* ordered to Alaskan waters to protect the interests of the United States and prevent the killing of fur-bearing mammals (seals)
- 1877- U.S. Army troops are withdrawn from the Alaskan territory. Governance falls to the Treasury Department and its representative, the Collector of Customs. As a law enforcement arm of the department, the Revenue Cutter Service is the embodiment of the law.
- 1880- USRC *Corwin* undertakes the first of what would become annual cruises in the Bering Sea to enforce the laws and provide a government presence in Alaska.
- 1882- Michael Healy, first African-American to command a U.S. government vessel becomes captain of USRC *Corwin*. He would later command USRC *Bear* and institute the transfer of reindeer from Siberia to Alaska.
- 1884- USRC *Bear* came to the rescue of the US Army's Greely Expedition which had set up a camp to study the winter conditions of Ellesmere Island. Relief ships in 1882 and 1883 had failed to reach the party.
- USRC *Corwin* cruised along the Alaskan ice pack to gather samples of seals for the Smithsonian Institution.
- 1885 Charles H. Townsend, a Smithsonian naturalist, sails on *Corwin* in order to hunt a polar bear to bring back to the Natural Museum.
- 1891- USRC *Bear* cruised over 5,000 miles to secure witnesses for the Department of Justice's case in the Hemingway murder trial
- 1892- First transfer of reindeer from Siberia to Alaska; conducted annually until 1906.
- 1895- To provide for better organization, operational readiness, and logistic support, the Bering Sea Patrol is formally established and headquartered at Unalaska. Captain Calvin L. Hooper is the first commander.
- 1897- Overland Expedition to Point Barrow, Alaska- 1st LT D.H. Jarvis, 2nd LT E.P. Bertholf, and Surgeon S.J. Call drive reindeer herds to prevent starvation of

whalers trapped in ice. USRC *Bear* eventually is able to pass through the Bering Straits and rendezvous with the expedition at Point Barrow in 1898.

1899 1st LT John C. Cantwell, commander of USRC *Nunivak*, offers to assist with scientific work in Alaska. The Secretary of the Treasury granted permission for the performance of these duties.

1912- Sinking of RMS *Titanic*; U.S. Navy cruisers *Chester* and *Birmingham* patrol the Grand Banks in search of icebergs.

1913- As the U.S. Navy cannot spare the ships for this duty the revenue cutters *Seneca* and *Miami* patrol the Grand Banks.

First International Conference on the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) is convened in London. This is an international effort to ensure that there are no further ship sinkings as a result of collisions with icebergs.

1914- The International Ice Patrol is established. Due primarily to the experience gained in 1912 and 1913, the United States Government was invited to undertake the management of the service, the expense to be defrayed by the 13 nations interested in trans-Atlantic navigation. The Revenue Cutter Service is charged with this mission; assumed by the Coast Guard in 1915.

1923- The unit headed by Edward "Iceberg" Smith, who used his own "practical method for determining ocean currents," tracked the movements of icebergs. He also initiated a method of iceberg forecasting which predicted the number of icebergs annually drifting south of Newfoundland. These patrols were conducted until 1931

1926- USCGC *Kickapoo* undergoes hull-modification to enable ice breaking in shallow harbors. This is the service's first designed icebreaker

1927- USCGC *Northland*, a cruising class of gunboat especially designed for Arctic operations is commissioned on 7 May. The cutter served on both the Bering Sea and Greenland Patrols.

1928- *Marion* Expedition- Smith was placed in command of USCGC *Marion*, a 125-foot offshore-patrol vessel. He was to take *Marion* into western Greenland to apply his surveying methods to the birthplace of icebergs. The 73-day cruise covered 8,100 miles, during which the ship surveyed an area nearly half a million square miles between Greenland and North America. *Marion's* crew made more than 1,900 recordings of water temperature and salinity at 190 observation stations. It would be the most comprehensive U.S. oceanographic expedition to that time.

1929- USCGC *Bear* is decommissioned after 44 years of enforcing the law, conducting rescues, aiding science, and working to improve conditions for the population of Alaska.

The Second International Conference on Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) was convened in London.

1931 “Iceberg” Smith participated in the German *Graf Zeppelin* Expedition over the Arctic. Despite the inability to fly north of 82° N latitude, the expedition proved an unqualified success. In only 136 hours of flight, *Graf Zeppelin* had passed over vast regions and had photographically surveyed large parts of the previously uncharted Arctic. Smith believed that aviation would prove essential to the Coast Guard’s mission of monitoring iceberg production in Arctic waters. As such, this expedition presaged the International Ice Patrol’s post-World War II use of aviation.

1936- LT Dale R. Simonson of Construction and Repair published a paper entitled “Bow Characteristics for Ice Breaking” in May. This paper will influence the future construction of ice-breaking vessels in the Coast Guard

Congress enacted legislation on 25 June 1936, formally requiring the Commandant of the Coast Guard to administer the International Ice Observation and Ice Patrol Service (Chap. 807, para. 2 49 USC 1922) and describing the manner in which this service was to be performed.

Executive Order No. 7521 directed the Coast Guard "to assist in keeping open to navigation by means of icebreaking operations...channels and harbors within the reasonable demands of commerce."

1940- What would come to be known as the Greenland Patrol is formed. The intent is to protect the cryolite mines in this Danish possession from German seizure. “Iceberg” Smith commands until 1942.

1941- USCG personnel make the first US naval capture of World War II when they seize the Norwegian-flagged *Buskoe* which was transmitting radio traffic for the Germans in Franz Josef Fjord.

1942- LTJG John A. Pritchard and Radioman 1/c Benjamin Bottoms and their Grumman J2F-4 from USCGC *Northland* crash while rescuing personnel from a B-17 which crashed on the west side of Greenland.

1942- Construction of the 269-foot Wind-class icebreaking cutters begins, ending in 1944. Three of the vessels of this class were transferred to the Soviet Union.

1943- CG cutters on the Greenland Patrol respond to the sinking of SS *Dorchester* and in the process pioneer the use of tethered rescue swimmers.

1944- Crewmen from USCGC *Eastwind* and USCGC *Southwind* capture the German naval auxiliary ship *Externsteine* along with the weather station personnel they had dispatched in Greenland.

1946- A PB4Y-1A makes the first International Ice Patrol reconnaissance flight. Later, two PB4Y-1s arrive in Argentia, Newfoundland to become the first dedicated Ice Patrol aircraft.

USCGC *Eastwind* made four trips to Greenland to re-supply bases in the Arctic. These re-supply missions around Greenland eventually are codenamed ARCTIC EAST. Later, Arctic re-supply missions that pass through the Bering Straits become known as ARCTIC WEST. In addition to ice breaking and re-supply operations, the vessels also support scientific research. These deployments are conducted annually often in conjunction with the U.S. Navy, U.S. Air Force, and Canadian forces.

U.S. Navy conducts OPERATION NANOOK to the Arctic during the summer. The mission was to erect a Radio and Weather station in Thule, Greenland. USCGC *Northwind* serves as the flagship

RADM Richard Byrd, USN (Ret.) took command of OPERATION HIGH JUMP with the new icebreaker USCG *Northwind*. The primary mission of OPERATION HIGH JUMP was to establish the Antarctic research base Little America IV. OPERATION HIGHJUMP charted most of the Antarctic coastline. It would become the precursor for subsequent expeditions to the Antarctic.

1948- USCGC *Northwind* resumed the Bering Sea Patrol, the first such patrol in eight years.

1949- Aircraft become the sole reconnaissance tools for the first time on the International Ice Patrol.

USCGC *Northwind* returns to the Arctic and in subsequent years serves on several U.S. Navy expeditions to the region.

1951- USCGC *Westwind* conducted typical winter icebreaking duties in the Atlantic.

1955- Coast Guard vessels were involved in facilitating the construction of the DEW (Distant Early Warning) Line. It was a system of radar stations in the far northern Arctic region of Canada, with additional stations along the North Coast and Aleutian Islands of Alaska, in addition to the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Iceland. It was set up to detect incoming Soviet bombers during the Cold War, and provide early warning for a land based invasion. Later, these same stations would also require icebreakers for their re-supply. These operations were often conducted in cooperation with the U.S. Navy.

OPERATION DEEP FREEZE is started. This is the first of a series of United States missions to Antarctica, beginning with OPERATION DEEP FREEZE I in 1955–56, followed by OPERATION DEEP FREEZE II, OPERATION DEEP FREEZE III, and so on. Given the continuing and constant U.S. presence in Antarctica since that date, OPERATION DEEP FREEZE has come to be used as a general term for U.S. operations in that continent, and in particular for the regular missions to resupply U.S. Antarctic bases, coordinated by the United States military.

1957- The 230-foot icebreaking cutter *Storis* and the 180-foot buoy tenders *Spar* and *Bramble* sailed through the Bering Sea to attempt a crossing of the Northwest

- Passage. In sixty-four days the ships crossed the Arctic, making them the first American ships to make the passage from the Pacific to the Atlantic Ocean, north of the North American continent. *Spar* also became the first ship to circumnavigate the continent in one year. This effort was assisted by the U.S. Navy and Canada.
- 1965- The Coast Guard is assigned the responsibility for developing and maintaining a fleet of icebreaking vessels capable of operating effectively in the heavy ice regions of the Arctic and Antarctic. The U.S. Navy icebreakers *Staten Island* (ex-*Northwind*), *Edisto*, *Burton Island*, *Southwind*, and *Glacier* are subsequently transferred to the USCG.
- 1968- USCGC *Eastwind* decommissioned.
- 1974- USCGC *Staten Island*, *Edisto*, and *Southwind* are decommissioned.
- 1976- Icebreakers *Polar Sea* and *Polar Star* are commissioned.
- 1978- USCGC *Burton Island* is decommissioned.
- 1987- USCGC *Glacier* is decommissioned.
- 1988- USCGC *Westwind* decommissioned.
- 1989- USCGC *Northwind* decommissioned.
- 1990- The President's Report on Polar Icebreaker Requirements has indicated a national need for three polar icebreakers operated by the Coast Guard plus one ice capable research vessel leased by the National Science Foundation.
- 1994- USCGC *Polar Sea*, in concert with the CCCS *Louis S. Ste. Laurent*, became the first U.S. surface vessel to reach the North Pole.
- 1998- The following nations contribute to the funding of the International Ice Patrol -Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Panama, Poland, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, and the United States.
- 2000- USCGC *Healy* joins USCGC *Polar Sea* and USCGC *Polar Star* at their homeport, Seattle, WA, and is subsequently commissioned.
- 2007- USCGC *Storis* is decommissioned. Only three ocean-going icebreakers remain in the fleet.
- 2008- USCGC *Healy* deploys on ARCTIC WEST 2008. During the deployment the cutter cooperates with CCCS *Louis S. Ste. Laurent* on the collaborative Extended Continental Shelf mission.

- 2009- USCGC *Healy* deploys on ARCTIC WEST 2009. During the deployment the cutter cooperates with CCCS *Louis S. Ste. Laurent* on the collaborative Extended Continental Shelf mission.
- 2010- USCGC *Healy* deploys on ARCTIC WEST 2010. During the deployment the cutter cooperates with CCCS *Louis S. Ste. Laurent* on the collaborative Extended Continental Shelf mission.