

Coast Guard Demobilizes Two Alaska Forward Operating Locations



KODIAK, Alaska – Coast Guard Air Station Kodiak aircrews demobilized forward operating locations (FOLs) in St. Paul and Cold Bay on March 15, concluding the supplemental coverage of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Chain, the Coast Guard 17th District said in a March 25 release.

The aircrews deployed on two-week rotations to increase readiness and decrease response times to the Bering Sea fishing fleet during periods of increased maritime activity.

Air Station Kodiak MH-60 Jayhawk helicopter aircrews deployed to Cold Bay from Oct. 20 to Nov. 20, 2018, and then again from Jan. 15 to Feb. 19, 2019. Aircrews later deployed to St. Paul from Feb. 17 to March 15 in support of Coast Guard operations in the Bering Sea to provide search-and-rescue and maritime law-enforcement coverage.

In addition to the deployed Jayhawk aircrew, the Coast Guard Cutter Alex Haley, the Coast Guard Cutter Douglas Munro and the Coast Guard Cutter John Midgett, with an MH-65 Dolphin helicopter aircrew embarked, provided supplemental SAR support and maritime law-enforcement coverage in the Bering Sea.

Throughout the three-month season, Coast Guard assets and crews conducted 24 SAR cases and provided more than 114 SAR hours, resulting in 19 lives saved and 29 assisted.

Due to the fishing fleet moving further north in the Bering Sea and to augment the cutter presence, Air Station Kodiak increased its readiness by deploying crews to St. Paul. Before re-opening the St. Paul FOL, it had been without a deployed

crew since 2014.

To meet mission requirements, aircrews performed 15 HC-130 Hercules airplane logistics flights, totaling more than 90 flight hours from Kodiak to St. Paul. While forward-deployed, St. Paul MH-60 aircrews responded to two cases, resulting in one life saved and five assisted.

“This has been a great Bering Sea deployment season, and as the fleet shifted further north, it was an all-hands-on-deck evolution to mobilize our crews and reopen our facility in St. Paul mid-season,” said Lt. Cmdr. Tom Huntley, Air Station Kodiak Jayhawk assistant operations officer. “This shift allowed us to maintain our search-and-rescue posture and protect our critical fishing industry, and it allowed us to be ready and responsive when called upon.”

Both FOLs are part of the Coast Guard’s mobile presence and as such are focused on performing the services’ statutory missions to ensure maritime safety, security and stewardship throughout Alaska.

To follow the fishing fleet and to prepare for the projected increased summer maritime activity, Jayhawk aircrews are scheduled to deploy to FOLs in both Cordova and Kotzebue.