

Coast Guard Heavy Icebreaker Departs Seattle for Deployment Bound for Antarctica



U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Polar Star (WAGB 10) transits across Elliott Bay after departing Coast Guard Base Seattle, Washington, Nov. 22, 2024. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Briana Carter)

From U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Area, Nov. 26, 2024

SEATTLE – The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Polar Star (WAGB 10) and crew departed Seattle, Friday, beginning their deployment to Antarctica in support of Operation Deep Freeze.

Operation Deep Freeze (ODF) is an annual joint military mission to resupply the United States Antarctic stations in support of the National Science Foundation (NSF), the lead agency for the United States Antarctic Program (USAP). This marks the 28th year that the Polar Star has supported ODF.

Each year, the Polar Star breaks a navigable channel through the ice, allowing fuel and supply ships to reach McMurdo Station, which is the largest Antarctic station and the logistics hub of the USAP.

“I am thrilled to lead Polar Star back to Antarctica for ODF 25. After months of pre-deployment preparation and working together through various challenges, the cutter and crew are ready to embark on this enduring and critical mission,” said Capt. Jeff Rasnake, Polar Star’s commanding officer. “I couldn’t be prouder of this crew’s tremendous dedication and teamwork. They have met or exceeded all my expectations in the maintenance and training phases and continue to push

themselves to build upon those successes as we now shift into the cutter's operations phase."

The U.S. Coast Guard is recapitalizing its polar icebreaker fleet to ensure continued access to the polar regions and to protect the country's economic, environmental, and national security interests in the high latitudes. Each year, the Polar Star's crew commits significant time and effort preparing the 48-year-old cutter for the annual deployment in support of ODF. This year the Polar Star completed the fourth of five planned phases of the [service life extension project \(SLEP\)](#).

The U.S. Coast Guard provides direct logistical support to the NSF and maintains a regional presence that preserves Antarctica as a scientific refuge working under Joint Task Force-Support Forces Antarctica (JTF-SFA). JTF-SFA provides Department of Defense support to the NSF and the USAP through ODF. Every year, a joint and total force team works together to complete a successful ODF season. Active, Guard, Reserve service members from the U.S. Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, and Navy work together to forge a strong JTF-SFA that continues the proud tradition of U.S. military support to the USAP.