

# 17<sup>th</sup> COAST GUARD DISTRICT ENFORCEMENT REPORT



## 2020 Year in Review

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<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
I. IUU & High Seas Drift Net Enforcement .....	2
II. US/Russian Maritime Boundary Line (MBL) Enforcement .....	2
III. US/Canadian EEZ Boundary (Dixon Entrance) Enforcement .....	2
IV. Marine Protected Species and Critical Habitat Enforcement .....	2
V. Commercial Fishing Vessel Boarding Statistics .....	2
VI. Halibut and Sablefish Enforcement.....	3
VII. Forward Operating Location .....	3
VIII. Crab Fisheries.....	4
IX. Continuing Operations during COVID-19 .....	4
X. Commercial Fishing Vessel Safety/Search and Rescue Cases .....	4
XI. North Pacific Regional Fishery Training Center .....	5
XII. Coast Guard Resource Summary .....	5
XIII. Russian Military Interactions with U.S. Fishing Fleet.....	6

## Figures

1. Fisheries Boardings By Year.....	3
2. Fisheries Violations By Year .....	3
3. Historical Overview of CFVS Statistics.....	5
4. Annual HC-130 Flight Hours .....	5
5. Annual Major Cutter Days .....	5
6. Annual H60/H65 Hours.....	6
7. Annual Patrol Boat Hours .....	6
8. Russian Military Interaction.....	7

## List of Abbreviations

AVDET – Aviation Detachment	NPSC – North Pacific SAR Coordinator
CFVS – Commercial Fishing Vessel Safety	NVG – Night Vision Goggles
CGC – Coast Guard Cutter	PD – Police Department
DIW – Dead in the Water	POB – Persons on board
EPIRB – Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon	SAR – Search and Rescue
FBS - Russian Federal Border Service	SARSAT – Search and Rescue Satellite Aided Tracking
FF/V – Foreign Fishing Vessel	SMC – SAR Mission Coordinator
FOL – Forward Operating Location	UMIB –Urgent Marine Info Broadcast
GOA – Gulf of Alaska	WLB –225ft Buoy Tender
HC-130 – USCG Fixed-Wing Aircraft	WPB – 110ft Patrol Boat
HEC/MEC – High/Medium Endurance Cutters	
HFP – Health Force Partners	
HH65/60 – CG helicopter	
HSDN – High Seas Drift Net	
IUU – Illegal, Unregulated, and Unreported Fishing	
IVO – In the vicinity of	
MARB – Marine Assistance Request Broadcast	
MBL – US/Russian Maritime Boundary	
MEDEVAC – Medical Evacuation	
MEDICO – Passing of medical advice at sea by electronic communications	

## **I. IUU Fishing & High Seas Drift Net (HSDN) Enforcement**

From 18 July to 14 September, CGC DOUGLAS MUNRO patrolled the high seas of the North Pacific for Operation North Pacific Guard. This supported the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), North Pacific Fisheries Commission (NPFC), and North Pacific Anadromous Fisheries Commission (NPAFC) regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs). CGC DOUGLAS MUNRO conducted nine international fisheries boardings on vessels flagged in China, Taiwan, and Vanuatu, resulting in 14 potential violations that were forwarded to the vessels' flag state and the representative RFMO for disposition. CGC DOUGLAS MUNRO also conducted two fisheries boardings of US domestic vessels fishing in international waters with no violations detected.

## **II. U.S./Russian Maritime Boundary Line (MBL) Enforcement**

Foreign fishing vessel activity along the MBL was medium to low during the majority of 2020, with high activity occurring from June through mid-July. District 17 detected two MBL incursions of up to 2.0 NM into the U.S. EEZ, both from the same Russian Fishing Vessel OSTROVNOY 9. District 17 notified the Russian Border Guard, who issued administrative violations to the vessel.

## **III. U.S./Canadian EEZ Boundary (Dixon Entrance) Enforcement**

Canadian fishing activity along the U.S.-Canadian EEZ boundary in the vicinity of Dixon Entrance was light in 2020. All Canadian fishing vessels sighted were south of the A-B line and District 17 detected no foreign incursions into U.S. waters.

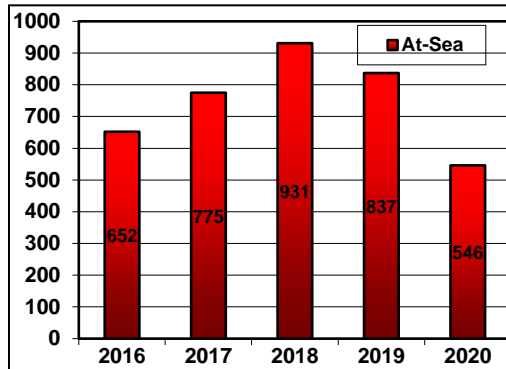
## **IV. Marine Protected Resources and Critical Habitat Enforcement**

The Coast Guard monitors more than 151 critical habitat areas around Alaska each month as part of routine cutter and aircraft patrol activity. During 2020, the Coast Guard conducted 12 flights out of Kodiak, Nome, and Sitka and two small boat patrols in Juneau in support of Marine Protected Resources and NOAA's Protected Resources Division (PRD). District 17 detected no violations on these flights, but provided assistance in support of several ongoing open investigations by NOAA OLE and PRD, including whale carcass surveys for the gray whale and ice seal unusual mortality events (UMEs).

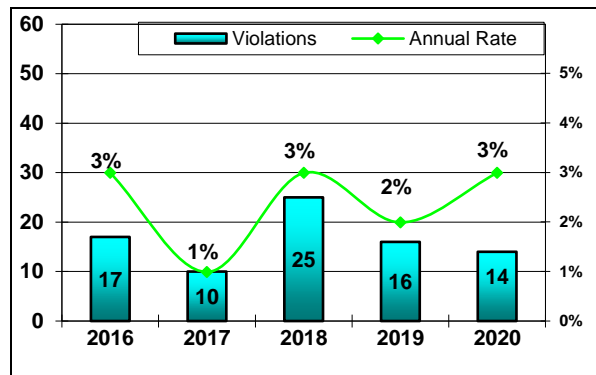
## **V. Commercial Fishing Vessel Boarding Statistics**

District 17 conducted 546 federal fisheries boardings during 2020. Figures 1 and 2 show the historic trends for boardings and violations. The top five fisheries violations were: not transmitting on VMS while targeting sablefish, the biodegradable mesh opening on pots being too narrow, not using a logbook to record catch, failure to follow the Pacific Cod and Rockfish Retention Program, and mutilated size-restricted halibut.

**Figure 1. Fisheries Boardings By Year**



**Figure 2. Fisheries Violations by Year**



## VI. Halibut and Sablefish Enforcement

In 2020, Coast Guard patrols conducted 466 boardings on commercial, charter, and recreational vessels targeting halibut and sablefish. District 17 conducted 146 boardings of IFQ halibut or sablefish vessels, detecting eight fisheries violations including biodegradable mesh opening being too narrow, not retaining Pacific Cod, not retaining Rockfish, not logging catch in required logbook, not recording discards, and not transmitting VMS while targeting sablefish. District 17 conducted 72 boardings on charter halibut vessels, detecting one fisheries violation for failure to retain carcasses of size restricted charter halibut and one seizure of mutilated halibut during a joint boarding with Alaska Wildlife Troopers (AWT). District 17 conducted 248 boardings on recreational vessels targeting halibut with no fisheries violations.

## VII. Forward Operating Locations

Air Station Kodiak deployed an MH-60 and air crew to FOL Cold Bay from 15 January 2020 through 16 March 2020 for increased activity in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Island crab and trawl fisheries.

Air Station Kodiak deployed an MH-60 to FOL Cordova on 01 May to support the increase in fishing vessel activity in the Gulf of Alaska. District 17 stages a helicopter and crew there from 01 May through 30 September each year to increase Search and Rescue coverage and support Law Enforcement and Protected Living Marine Resources.

Air Station Kodiak also deployed two MH-60s to FOL Kotzebue from 01 July through 01 November to support Search and Rescue coverage, community engagement, and Protected Living Marine Resources activities.

Air Station Kodiak deployed an MH-60 to FOL Cold Bay for the Bering Sea crab season opening from 15-28 November.

## **VIII. Crab Fisheries**

Coast Guard units conducted 23 boardings on fishing vessels targeting crab throughout Alaska, 11 in the Bering Sea. Representatives from District 17's Commercial Fishing Vessel Safety division travelled to Dutch Harbor, AK prior to the crab opener to conduct courtesy safety exams and outreach.

## **IX. Continuing Operations during COVID-19**

In the early onset of the Coronavirus pandemic, there was a significant decrease in boarding activity due to early risk assessments in conjunction with medical and industry measures. Based on efforts in industry, abiding by the Alaska State Health Mandates, and the Coast Guard's own safety and health guidance and policy, the Coast Guard has resumed all enforcement efforts and patrols with the exception of circumstances that arise on a case by case basis. The Coast Guard has taken very measured precautions to ensure the safety of its members and the public while carrying out its mission sets. The Coast Guard is committed to ensuring the health and safety of the public and are closely monitoring local COVID-19 trends. Our crews are following all the latest CDC safety guidance as we continue to perform our statutory missions in Alaska. Boarding safety precautions include determining COVID-19 exposure risks by asking a series of pre-boarding questions and ensuring boarding team personnel are wearing full personal protection equipment including masks and gloves. We are committed to safely conducting critical operations while maintaining precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

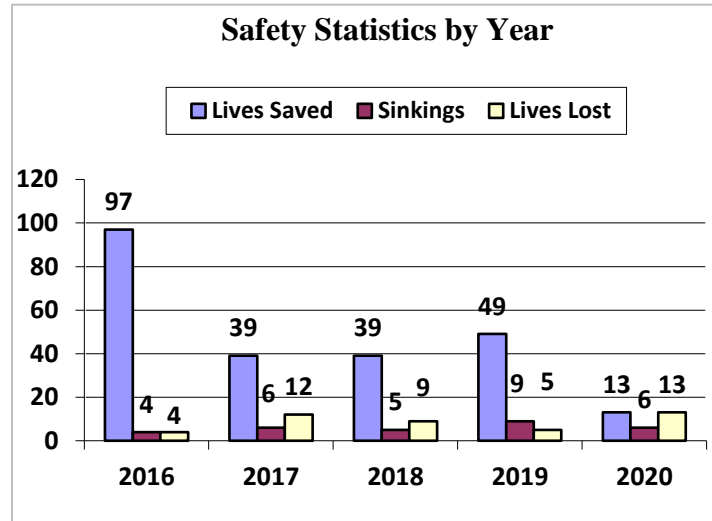
Multiple Coast Guard members participate in the weekly AFISHC and Alaska Industry calls to mesh best practices and work with State and Industry to build a safe working environment. Swift and decisive measures taken by the fishing industry and the State of Alaska have assisted Coast Guard efforts to maintain operational readiness and effective at-sea enforcement.

## **X. Commercial Fishing Vessel Safety/Search and Rescue Cases**

During 2020, District 17 detected 57 safety violations on 40 vessels. District 17 resources terminated three voyages due to no child size immersion suit, expired survival craft, insufficient quantity of immersion suits, and no inflatable buoyancy apparatus. The top five violations were expired visual distress signals, expired hydrostatic releases, expired EPIRB registration, expired survival craft, and expired/incorrect/insufficient fire extinguishers.

District 17 conducted 59 search and rescue (SAR) cases involving fishing vessels in U.S. waters, resulting in 15 lives saved, six vessels lost, and 13 lives lost during 2020.

**Figure 3. Historical Overview of CFVS Statistics**



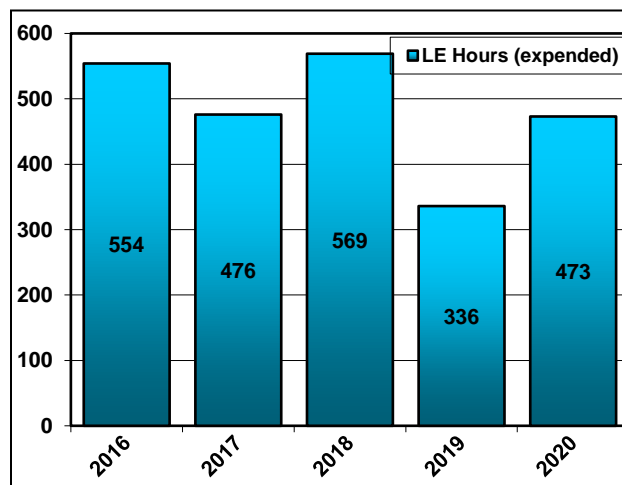
**XI. North Pacific Regional Fishery Training Center**

During 2020, the North Pacific Regional Fishery Training Center in Kodiak held 18 convenings of six different courses, training 170 US Coast Guard and NOAA students from 24 different units. Additionally, they conducted five workshops for less formal but directed training in support of operational units.

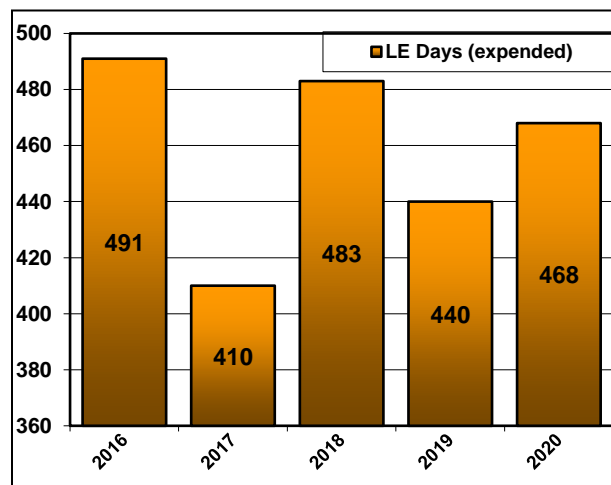
**XII. Coast Guard Resource Summary**

Figures 4 - 7 show the annual aircraft law enforcement hours, Medium and High Endurance Cutter days, and Patrol Boat hours used in the Seventeenth District.

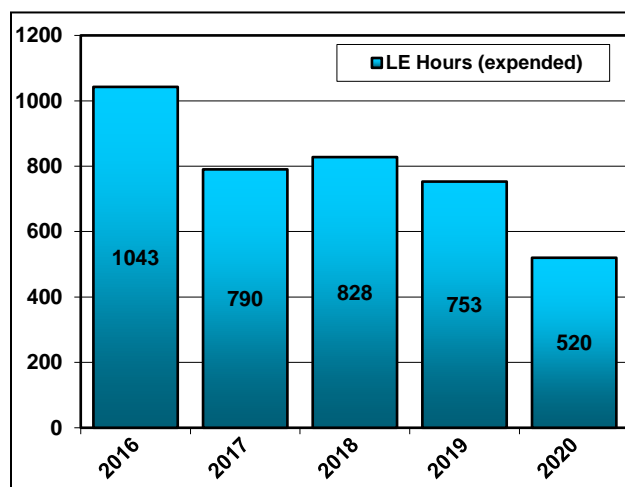
**Figure 4. Annual HC-130 (fixed wing) Hours**



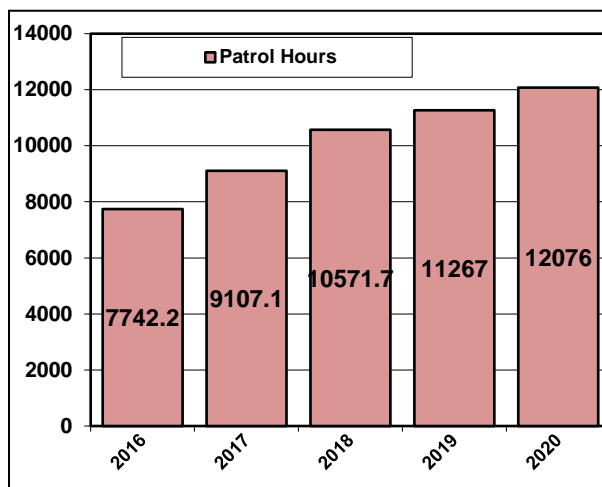
**Figure 5. Annual Major Cutter Days**



**Figure 6. Annual H60/65 (rotary wing) Hours**



**Figure 7. Annual Patrol Boat Hours**



### **XIII. Russian Military Interactions with U.S. Fishing Fleet**

U.S. fishing vessels were actively fishing near the U.S.-Russia Maritime Boundary Line on August 26, 2020 when a Russian jet overflew the fishing vessels and spoke to the vessels over VHF channel 16. The broadcast was in broken English, but the vessels could only make out the words “DANGER AREA”. A fishing vessel master stated that the aircraft wanted the vessel to move. The aircraft made multiple passes over the vessels and told them to change their heading and leave the danger area. The aircraft left and came back 30 minutes later and told the fishing vessels to steer to a directed heading at max speed, as they were in a danger area. Then the aircraft said that there was a sub in the area, and that the vessels were in danger of a potential missile launch.

Russia was conducting exercise OCEAN SHIELD from August 24 to September 10, 2020. OCEAN SHIELD started in 2018 in the Mediterranean. Last year, OCEAN SHIELD was conducted in the Baltic Sea, and this year in the Bering Sea. Open source reporting indicated, Russia intends to conduct Ocean Shield exercises on a permanent basis. OCEAN SHIELD is an annual exercise, and it has not been conducted in the same location each year. Russia’s published area of the exercise was largely in the Russia EEZ, with only a small portion of the exercise area falling in the U.S. EEZ. Since the vast majority of the exercise area fell within the Russian EEZ, there was no anticipation Russia would proceed to ask U.S. fishing vessels to move off their fishing grounds.

While the United States respects the rights of the Russian Navy to conduct exercises in international waters, the U.S. Domestic Fishing fleet retains the right to legally fish within the boundaries of the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone. The safety of life at sea should always be paramount in managing safe navigation of any vessel on the high seas. However, the U.S. fishing fleet is not required to depart the legal fishing grounds of the US EEZ when directed by a foreign entity. During the October 2020 NPFMC meeting, the Coast Guard presented the Council with a summary of this incident, and proposed measures to ensure safety during future interaction, including vessels subscribing to the HYDROPAC notifications and the Coast Guard broadcasting the locations of exercises to the fishing fleet.

Figure 8. Russian Military Interaction

