AMERICAN LEGION
Columbia Post 300



Incursion Off Ketchikan, Alaska

Anthony Reed, Petty Officer First Class

Aboard the Coast Guard Cutter Acushnet I served as a First-Class Petty Officer between June 2000 to June 2002. One of the primary missions of the Acushnet was to patrol the Maritime Boundary Line. The Maritime Boundary Line separates the territorial waters between the United States and Russia in the Bering Sea. During my first patrol in August of 2000 our cutter came across a Russian trawler fishing with its outriggers (fishing nets) down in waters east of the Maritime Boundary Line and beyond the 5-mile Exclusive Economic Zone. The Exclusive Economic Zone serves as an acceptable buffer area for minor course deviations according to our ship's navigation team. The bridge lookout alerted the bridge Officer of the Deck upon seeing the suspicious contact off the ship's bow. The Officer of the Deck confirmed the exact latitude and longitude location before notifying the Commanding Officer who promptly gives the approval to set the incursion bill. The incursion bill triggers a series of engagement activities from launching the law enforcement small boat team, deployment of the visual contact "Snoopy" team to calling the linguist interpreter to the bridge. The Snoopy team handles the video and documentation resources. I served as the "standby to mark" lead for the quartermaster team. After identifying our unit and making several attempts to contact the trawler via radio line, the trawler's Captain grants approval to board for inspection after initially going silent. The inspection reveals about 150 pounds of various kinds of fish caught illegally in US waters. The Russian Captain initially disputes the navigation error before scolding a crew member according to boarding sources. The trawler was then escorted to a US custom authority to face potential fines or confiscation of their vessel according to the Operations Officer. The professional handling of the trawler encounter was later used as a training film. Also included are pictures of me aboard ship in Ketchikan and while underway on bridge detail.

While reading a recent Coast Guard news article I discovered the Coast Guard Cutter Acushnet was involved in the rescue of 18 members of the SS Fort Mercer which was one of two tankers that split in half during a massive winter storm near Cape Cod with estimated 60' to 70' seas. The other tanker crew (USS Pendleton) was recued miraculously by a Coast Guard small boat team that later became a featured movie called "Finest Hour."



