



# alaska BEAR

## The Seventeenth District Online Magazine

### ***Coast Guard Sector, MSST Guard Navy at Port of Anchorage***

*Story and Photos by PA1 Sara Francis*

A hulking green Stryker vehicle rolls down the offload ramp of the U.S. Navy Vessel Shughart guided by Army specialists in green camo in the early morning light Jan. 26, 2007. The vehicle rolls off the ramp and down the snowy pier through a checkpoint guarded by armed men not in camouflage but solid dark blue. They are Coast Guardsmen.

The Coast Guard Cutter SPAR, a 225-foot ocean going buoy tender from Kodiak, the Coast Guard Cutter Roanoke Island, a 110-foot patrol boat from Homer, and a Coast guard HH-60 Jayhawk helicopter from Air Station Kodiak escorted the Shughart from the Gulf of Alaska through Cook Inlet to the pier in Anchorage Wednesday Jan. 24, 2007.



ANCHORAGE, Alaska – BM2 Jeff Tuttle of MSST Anchorage stands watch in the early morning over one of the vehicle access points to the pier where the USNS Shughart is moored and offloading over 800 Stryker vehicles and containers from the 172<sup>nd</sup> Stryker Brigade Combat Team and C Company, 84<sup>th</sup> Engineering Battalion returning from service in Iraq. Official Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Sara Francis.

Upon arrival Coast Guardsmen set up a perimeter around the ship. They protect the access points to and from the ship at the pier. They have stood watch through driving snow, high winds and frigid temperatures day and night for three days. The teams are comprised of qualified members from Coast Guard Sector Anchorage and Maritime Safety and Security Team Anchorage with an augment group from Maritime Safety and Security Team Seattle. They stand watch for eight hours before being relieved.

To a spectator it may seem like overkill since anyone trying to gain access to the port must first cross through two checkpoints on Ocean Dock Road. However, it is the responsibility of the Coast Guard to be at the ready to respond to any threat. They are primarily focused on traffic and personnel as the inlet is choked with ice and famous for its fast current and extreme tides. However, a Coast Guard team is on the bridge of the ship to observe any waterside approaches.

The 907-foot USNS Shughart is Navy vessel carrying and offloading vehicles and containers belonging to Fort Wainwright's 172<sup>nd</sup> Stryker Brigade Combat Team and C Company, 84<sup>th</sup> Engineering Battalion returning from service in Iraq.

"The Coast Guard has the authority and expertise to protect the offload," said Lt. Tim Callister, Chief of the Enforcement Division at Coast Guard Sector Anchorage.



ANCHORAGE, Alaska – The 907-foot USNS Shughart moored at the Port of Anchorage. Over 800 Stryker vehicles and containers from the 172<sup>nd</sup> Stryker Brigade Combat Team and C Company, 84<sup>th</sup> Engineering Battalion returning from service in Iraq were offloaded. Official Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer Sara Francis.

Each service is responsible for something different. The Navy, under the supervision of the Military Sealift Command, provides the transportation for the equipment. The Army uses and maintains the equipment being offloaded to continue carrying out the mission in Iraq. The Coast Guard is responsible for Ports and Waterways Coastal Security, enforcing the Naval Vessel Protection Zone and providing Anti-terrorism Force Protection. Each service plays their part and has their own authority.

All the Coast Guard personnel participating in the armed offload watch are trained in law enforcement control techniques and are proficient with the Sig Sauer .40 caliber handgun, 9mm Beretta, the M-16 and the 12-gauge shotgun.

This is not the first offload that the Coast Guard has been a part of in Alaska nor will it be the last.

The USNS Shughart is one of the Military Sealift Command's Large, Medium-Speed Roll-on/Roll-off Ships and is part of the Sealift Program fleet.

Coast Guard Sector Anchorage is comprised of approximately 190 personnel total, about 60 are in Anchorage. They tackle a number of roles and missions including waterways management, pollution investigation and clean-up, marine casualty investigations, maritime homeland security and fishing vessel safety programs. They are responsible for all of Western and Southcentral Alaska. The personnel are highly trained in all manner of inspection, investigation, prevention and law enforcement practices. In the last two years personnel have responded to the motor vessel Selendang Ayu grounding in Unalaska, the rescue and salvage of the car carrier Cougar Ace in the North Pacific, the break away of the tank vessel Seabulk Pride from the pier in Nikiski and periods of heightened security

in Valdez.

Coast Guard Maritime Safety and Security Team Anchorage is one of 14 MSSTs nationwide. It is in its third year of operation and consists of approximately 75 members. They are an immediately deployable force that have worked all over Alaska and been part of operations on both coasts and in the Carribbean. MSST personnel receive training in Advanced Tactical Boat Operations and Anti-terrorism/ Force protection at the Coast Guard Special Missions Training Center located at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C. Their roles and missions range from vessel escorts and force protection to exclusion zone patrols in Valdez. They have conducted recreational boating safety boardings during holiday weekends like the 4<sup>th</sup> of July and Memorial Day around the state.

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