

# CG Cutter Munro to Patrol Alaskan Waters

The Seattle-based Coast Guard Cutter Munro sailed on Alaskan waters for the first time ever Jan. 12, to ensure that fishery laws and treaties are being observed. The 378-foot cutter was recently transferred from Boston to replace two cutters which were decommissioned.

When the Munro began its patrol it marked the 106th year of what has come to be known as the Alaska Patrol.

In 1868, the cutter Wayanda cruised the waters of Alaska with orders to prevent the illegal killing of fur bearing animals. These orders established the first Bering Sea Patrol, which has evolved into the present-day Alaska Patrol.

The Wayanda was destined to set a precedent which made the cutters the symbol of law

enforcement, medical aid, mail delivery, and assistance to those in distress.

Suffering the same growing pains as Alaska itself, the patrol now has a job description that was not in the wildest dreams of the early-day crewmembers.

The modern patrol is engaged in a vitally important struggle to protect the living resources of the sea in one of the most productive fisheries remaining in the world today.

The fisheries, and their products, for many years were the leading Alaskan resource; only in the last few years have they slipped into second place with the discovery of oil on Alaska's North Slope.

However, the fisheries are a renewable resource and with wise management should still

be there long after the oil is gone.

In 1971, the latest figures available, the Alaska fishing industry, whose boats range in size from 20-170 feet, caught approximately 470 million pounds of fish.

In the same year, from the same waters, Japanese, Soviet, South Korean, and Canadian high seas fishing fleets took about 4.7 billion pounds of fish, 10 times the U.S. catch.

The imbalance would have been greater had it not been for the efforts of the Alaska Patrol.

At present, 25 Coast Guard units are involved in the patrol. This includes three fixed-wing aircraft, six long-range helicopters, and 16 cutters. Of the 16 cutters, seven travel to Alaska from the West Coast and Hawaii

on a rotating basis.

With this staff of watchdogs, a year-round vigil is kept on the state's fishing grounds.

As part of a combined effort, a National Marine Fisheries Service Protection Officer is on board most of the cutters and aircraft engaged in patrolling the fisheries.

As a fisheries law enforcement officer, he provides the Coast Guard with expertise concerning the agreements with foreign countries whose nationals fish near Alaska.

He also helps identify foreign vessels and their fishing gear; estimates the size of their catch; and, identifies fish species.

Last year, 535 patrol days were tallied by all units involved. Area covered was about nine million square miles during which time foreign vessel sightings ranged from a high of 600 in July to a low of 75 in November.

In spite of the much talked about fuel shortage, 1974 operation plans call for no slacking of patrol efforts. Ships and aircraft, however, will be operated at their most economical speeds unless law enforcement action or search and rescue work requires greater speeds.

The Munro, under the command of Capt. Howard H. Istock, is one of the biggest and most recent additions to the Coast Guard fleet.

The cutter will carry a helicopter and small aviation detail in addition to her 155-man crew. She is due to return to Seattle in early March.