

# North Star sets sail to replenish villages

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The North Star III, the only converted World War II Victory ship still in active service, is once again headed north and west on a supply voyage that will take it to communities on the Alaska Peninsula, the Aleutian Islands and the entire western coast of Alaska as far north as the city of Kivalina above Kotzebue Sound, continuing a tradition that began in 1922.

On this year's single voyage, which began April 22 in Seattle and will end there about mid-September, the vessel will make about 40 scheduled stops in Alaska to unload cargo for about 57 communities.

The North Star III left Seattle April 22 with a cargo of 1.3 million gallons of

fuel oil — No. 2 diesel and No. 1 arctic grade, almost 1800 propane cylinders, motor gas, over 20,000 pounds of small arms ammunition, a sewage plant for Nelson Lagoon, trusses for the Scammon Bay school, groceries, assorted building materials, heavy equipment, boats, snowmobiles, and three-wheelers.

All totalled, it will deliver about 3 million gallons of heating fuel within Alaska, stopping at Dutch Harbor three times to replenish this fuel, according to Ship's Captain, Rodney Palmer, who took over the command last year.

Palmer, like the 40 other crewmembers of the North Star III, is an employee of the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs which owns and operates the vessel.

By law, the North Star III

is a self-paying operation, explained BIA's Juneau Area Director Jacob Lestenkof. The consignees — businesses, organizations and individuals in the communities served — pay a published tariff to ship on the North Star.

Lestenkof said that BIA expected to continue the non-profit resupply service so long as it was needed and it could generate sufficient revenues for its operation. However, Lestenkof said, the BIA must assure that the federal government is not placed in the position of competing with legitimate commercial concerns which might provide the same service.

Until this year, the North Star has made two supply trips a year to Alaska — three in the 1950's — said Gerald "Jerry" Taylor, director of BIA's Seattle Liaison Office.

Taylor manages the North Star operation.

Taylor explained that this year the North Star will not be supplying the North Slope Borough communities of Barrow, Wainwright, Pt. Lay and Pt. Hope. Commercial service to those points is being provided by the Native-owned Bowhead Transportation Co., he said.

The BIA guarantees delivery of cargo, regardless of delays and weather conditions. In 1970 when the North Star III was unable to offload at Barrow, it detoured to Seward and the cargo was transported by rail and then by air to Barrow at no additional expense. In 1975 when heavy ice conditions at Barrow prevented lightering of cargo to shore, charter helicopters brought the freight in.

The uniqueness of the North Star cargo delivery is that the ship encounters no direct docking or longshore facilities at any of the ports of call, Robertson said. The ship anchors offshore and all cargo is lightered to shore by four reinforced-bottom landing crafts (LCMs) that are carried on the fore and aft decks of the North Star III.

Two 50-ton heavy-lift booms mounted fore and aft on the superstructure not only load cargo and vehicles onto the LCMs but are capable of lifting the LCMs from the ship into the water.

The North Star also carries four 6,000 pound capacity fork lifts for loading