

# Stevens pushes colleagues for more Coast Guard funding

The Coast Guard's vital importance to Alaska was outlined by Sen. Stevens recently at a hearing of the Senate Commerce Committee. The committee is considering legislation to authorize Fiscal Year 1994 funding for the agency.

Stevens noted that Alaska's 34,000 mile shoreline, which the Coast Guard's 17th District encompasses, is more shoreline than the rest of the Lower 48 combined. "Commercial fishermen, recreational boaters, cruise ships and other vessels and airplanes are just some of those who depend on the Coast Guard in Alaska waters."

Stevens brought up the recent interception by the Coast Guard of Chinese vessels engaged in illegal driftnet fishing south of Alaska. Admiral J. William Kime, the Coast Guard commandant testifying before the Senate Commerce Committee, told Stevens he would provide the Coast Guard's report on the incident, as well as photos, to take with him to China when he travels there next week.

Stevens encouraged the Coast Guard to continue to be flexible in enforcing compliance with federal laws mandating the repair of faulty fuel storage tanks in Alaska villages. "Fuel tank farms throughout Alaska are in need of repair, and the estimated cost of upgrading all of the facilities is between \$200 and \$400 million," Stevens said. "That's just too much money for some of these villages."

The Coast Guard is charged with

enforcing regulations mandated by the Clean Water Act and the Oil pollution Act that deal with faulty fuel storage tanks near navigable waters. At the hearing Admiral Kime agreed to be flexible in enforcement in Alaska by providing communities time to comply with the mandates, rather than cut off the flow of fuel to the villages.

In addition, Stevens said, "We count on the Coast Guard to enforce fishery regulations within the 200-mile fisheries conservation zone under the Magnuson Act. And, the Coast Guard is available to assist branches of our armed services with defense missions."

Outlining some of the Coast Guard's recent accomplishments in Alaska, Senator Stevens told the panel that the 17th District noted the Coast Guard assisted a sinking vessel in the Bering Sea, med-evaced a Russian soldier from Big Diomedes Island, located lost snowmobilers on Nunivak Island and recovered 120 pounds of marijuana from a beach near Cape Suckling, he said. "This gives you an idea of how diverse and widespread the duties of the Coast Guard are in Alaska," Stevens said.

Other Alaska projects included in the coast Guard's budget request are funds for the Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) upgrade in Prince William Sound, funding for a number of projects at the Kodiak Coast Guard Base, including money to establish a regional fisheries law enforcement training center, and construction projects in Sitka and Petersburg.