



U.S. Coast Guard History Program

Bering Strait, 1948



WAVP / WHEC-382
Radio Call Sign: NBYG

Bering Strait was named for the body of water between Siberia and Alaska that connects the Arctic Ocean and Bering Sea.

Builder: Lake Washington Shipyards, Houghton, WA

Commissioned: 19 July 1944 (USN)
14 December 1948 (USCG)

Decommissioned: 1 January 1971

Disposition: Transferred to South Vietnam

Length: 311'7" oa; 299'11"bp

Navigation Draft: 13'1" max (1964)

Beam: 41' max

Displacement: 2,498 tons, full load (1966)

Main Engines: Fairbanks-Morse, direct reversing diesels

SHP: 6,400

Performance, Maximum Sustained: 17.3 kts, 10,138-mi radius (1966)

Performance, Economic: 10.0 kts, 20,000-mi radius (1966)

Complement: 10 officers, 3 warrants, 138 men (1966)

Electronics: Radar (1 each): AN/SPA-4A; AN/SPS-23; ID-445/SPS; IP-307/SPS; IP-452/SPS;
Mk-34; M11 ; AN/SPS-29B; AN/UPA-24A; AN/UPX-1A
Sonar: ?

Armament: 1 x 5"/38 Mk-12 M1; 2 x .50 caliber; 1 x Mk-10 M1 A/S projector; 2 x
Mk-32 M2 torpedo launchers; Mk-57 M4; Mk-4 M4 fire control radar (1966).

Class History:

The *Casco* class ships were built as small seaplane tenders by the US Navy. They were designed to operate out of small harbors and atolls and had a shallow draft. The fact that the class was very seaworthy, had good habitability, and long range made them well suited to ocean-station duty. In fact, an assessment made by the Coast Guard on the suitability of these vessels for Coast Guard service noted:

"The workmanship on the vessel is generally quite superior to that observed on other vessels constructed during the war. The vessel has ample space for stores, living accommodations, ships, offices and recreational facilities. The main engine system is excellent. . . .The performance of the vessel in moderate to heavy seas is definitely superior to that of any other cutter. This vessel can be operated at higher speed without storm damage than other Coast Guard vessels." [Memo, CDR W. C. Hogan, Commanding Officer, CGC MC CULLOCH to Commandant "SUBJ; CGC MC CULLOCH, Sutiability [sic] for use as CG Cutter.", 12 February 1947; copy in 311-Class Cutter File, USCG Historian's Office.]

Once they were accepted into Coast Guard service, a number of changes were made in these ships to prepare them for ocean-station duty. A balloon shelter was added aft; there were spaces devoted to oceanographic equipment and a hydrographic winch as well as an oceanographic winch were added.

See *DANFS* for naval service.

Cutter History:

Bering Strait was stationed in Seattle, Washington, from 14 December 1948 to 1954. She was used for law enforcement, ocean station, and search and rescue operations in the Pacific.

From 1954 to 1 January 1971, she was stationed at Honolulu, Hawaii and conducted the same tasks. In January 1956 she medevaced an injured seaman from M/V *Madaket*. On 13 February

1960, she provided emergency repairs to the Japanese training ship *Toyama Maru* off Palmyra Island after 1 ton of cement patch material had been air-dropped. *Bering Strait* conducted oceanographic experiments while serving on Ocean Station VICTOR in December 1964 and January 1965 and again from 19 June to 10 July 1966. On 13 January 1965, she relieved the disabled cutter *Matagorda* and stood by the disabled Liberian M/V *Saint Helena* 1,000 miles northwest of Midway Island until a commercial tug arrived.

From 4 May 1967 to 18 February 1968 assigned to Coast Guard Squadron Three, Vietnam. From 24 February to 1 March 1970 *Bering Strait* fought fire on the Panamanian M/V *Grand Ocean* in the mid-Pacific. She was again reassigned to Coast Guard Squadron Three, Vietnam, from 17 May to 31 December 1970.

Bering Strait was transferred to South Vietnam on 1 January 1971 and renamed *Tran Quang Khai*. She fled to Philippines at the fall of South Vietnam. She was then incorporated into the Philippine Navy as *Diego Silang* until she was laid up as non-operational in June of 1985. She was "disposed of in July 1990" (by scrapping?).

Photographs:

Photo # NH 97595 USCGC Bering Strait in the 1950s



CGC *Bering Strait* underway, 1950s.
Naval Historical Center photograph.



Bering Strait in service in Vietnam.



Bering Strait in Vietnam.

Sources:

311' Class Cutter File, USCG Historian's Office

Bering Strait, Cutter Subject File, USCG Historian's Office

Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships, Vol. I (1959), pp. 118-119.

"Listings: AVP's"; compiled and written by LCDR J. P. Smith, USCGR, copy in 311' Class Cutter File, USCG Historian's Office.

Olsen, A. L., Jr., Commander. Senior Coast Guard Officer, Philippines. *Report*: "Ships returned from Viet Nam: Preliminary Inspection Ex-WAVP/WHEC", 1975, copy in 311' Class Cutter File, USCG Historian's Office.

Robert Scheina, *U.S. Coast Guard Cutters & Craft, 1946-1990* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1990), pp. 10-16.

Ship's Characteristics Card: USCGC Bering Strait, 5 July 1966.

