



U.S. Coast Guard History Program

Yakutat, 1948



WHEC-380
Call Sign: NBWJ

Yakutat was named for a bay on the southern coast of Alaska.

Builder: Associated Shipbuilders, Inc., Seattle, WA

Commissioned: 31 May 1944 (USN); loaned to USCG 31 Aug 1948
23 Nov 1948 (USCG); permanently transferred to USCG 26 September 1966

Decommissioned: 1 January 1971; transferred to South Vietnam that same day

Disposition: Scrapped in Philippines

PARTICULARS, AS OF 1966:

Length: 310' 9-1/4" oa; 300' 0" bp

Navigation Draft: 12' 11" full load

Beam: 41' max

Displacement: 2,529 fl

Main Engines: Fairbanks-Morse, direct reversing diesels

SHP: 6,400

Performance, Maximum Sustained: 17.6 kts, 9,500 mile nautical mile range

Performance, Economic: 11.0 kts, 20,000-mi range

Complement: 10 officers, 3 warrants, 138 crewmen

Electronics: Radar: SPS-23; SPS-29D
Sonar: SQS-1

Armament: 1966: 1 x 5"/38 Mk 12-1; 1 x Mk 10-1 A/S projector; 2 x Mk 32 torpedo tube launchers (3 tubes each)

1967: 1 x 5"/38 Mk 12-1; 6 x .50 caliber mgs; 2 x 81mm mortars

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, Suitability [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 and an oceanographic winch were added.

See *DANFS* for naval service.

Cutter History:

Yakutat was commissioned in Coast Guard service on 23 November 1948 and she was homeported first in Portland, Maine and transferred to New Bedford, Massachusetts in June, 1954 where she served from until 1 January 1971. She was used for law enforcement, ocean station, search and rescue operations and occasional training cruises.

In February 1952 the crew earned one Gold and five Silver Life-Saving Medals for their rescue of crew members from the tankers *Fort Mercer* and *Pendleton* off Cape Cod after they had broken in two and foundered. During the rescue *Yakutat* served as the ship in tactical command. In December 1952 she rescued four people from a downed private aircraft off St. George's, Bermuda. On 14 September 1953 *Yakutat* performed emergency repairs by constructing a concrete bulkhead and pumping bilges of the Spanish M/V *Marte*, which had a large at the waterline, while some 750 miles southeast of Argentia, Newfoundland. *Yakutat's* repairs permitted the merchantman to reach St. Johns, Newfoundland safely. In the fall of 1955 *Yakutat* assisted the Portuguese F/V *Jose Alberto*.

She earned the Navy Expeditionary Medal for service from 12 April 1961 to 07 May 1961 during the "Cuban operation." From 27 April to 3 May 1965 she dewatered and shored the damaged Liberian M/V *Bordabere* 400 miles south of Cape Race, Newfoundland, and escorted her to Halifax, Nova Scotia. In late November of 1965 she assisted the U.S. M/Vs *American Pilot* and *Maumee Sun* following their collision west of the Cape Cod Canal. In 1965 *Yakutat* was presented with the first of the Commander, Eastern Area Ship Performance Awards for high endurance cutters. The cutter "was thus signified as the number one ship of the 22 high endurance cutters on the Atlantic and Gulf coasts. This award was based upon overall performances in Search and Rescue, Ocean Station duty, equipment reliability, special mission assignments, and search and rescue training.. To qualify for this award a ship must first achieve the Coast Guard Military Readiness Award during her Refresher Training with the Navy at Guantanamo." (as quoted in the cutter's 1968 *Welcome Aboard* pamphlet, *Yakutat* Cutter Subject File)

The Navy permanently transferred her to the Coast Guard on 26 September 1966 and she was struck from the Navy List. From 4 May 1967 until 1 January 1968 *Yakutat* was assigned to Coast Guard Squadron Three, Vietnam. Here she was assigned to interdict Communist supply lines by sea, boarding suspected vessels, and conducting naval gunfire support missions. On 6 July 1967 she collided with the U.S. Navy tanker *Cimarron* during refueling operations and underwent repairs at Subic Bay. After her nine-month tour-of-duty *Yakutat* returned home to New Bedford,

arriving there on 28 January 1968. Her only casualty during the combat deployment was QM1 William R. Sansom who drowned while the cutter was in Subic Bay.

She sustained minor damage when she was hit by the F/V *Seafreeze Atlantic* while docking at New Bedford. Then *Yakutat* was assigned once again to Squadron Three in Vietnam where she served from 17 May to 31 December 1970. She was decommissioned and transferred to South Vietnam along with her sister cutter *Bering Strait* on 1 January 1971. *Yakutat* was renamed *Tran Nhat Duat* (HQ-3). They were the first two cutters from Squadron Three to be transferred.

After the fall of South Vietnam the former cutter escaped to the Philippines. She was inspected by a Coast Guard team before she was taken into service in the Philippine Navy where she was used for spare parts. She was ultimately disposed of (scrapped?) in 1982.

Photographs:



CGC *Yakutat*, no date/caption/photo number; photographer unknown.



"Crewmen of the U.S. Coast Guard YAKUTAT draw in a rubber liferaft with the last two survivors from the bow section of the broken tanker SS FORT MERCER. Twenty minutes later the broken hulk heaved into the air and turned keel upward to sink into the sea. Four of nine men stranded on the bow section were rescued by the YAKUTAT. The others disappeared in the sea -- four while jumping during a rescue attempt under the canopy of evening darkness (February 18, 1952) when a line holding three life rafts parted, and one while transferring from the after end of the hulk to the forward section during the night when rescue attempts were abandoned until daylight."

Official USCG Photo, 2-18-52(3); Photographer unknown.



CGC *Yakutat*, no date/caption/photo number; photographer unknown.

Sources:

Yakutat, Cutter Subject File, USCG Historian's Office

Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships.

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

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.

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 *Yakutat*, 2 May 1966

