

Coast Guard's National Security Cutter Heading To Baltimore

After months of speculation and rumor, the Coast Guard's first National Security Cutter (NSC), the CGC *Bertholf* (WMSL 750), left **Northrop Grumman's** [NOC] Pascagoula, Miss., shipyard and is now making its way up the East Coast to Baltimore before heading to its homeport in Alameda, Calif.

The Coast Guard accepted delivery of the NSC last month, which allowed the crew to move aboard and operate the ship. *Bertholf* remained in Pascagoula while workers completed work on the cutter. The ship completed three underway periods over the past month in preparation for Saturday's sail-away.

"This past weekend the crew seized their prize, they severed the bonds of the shipyard one last time and eagerly begin the journey home," Capt. Patrick Stadt, commanding officer, *Bertholf*, said. "I couldn't be more excited for them; they've worked extremely hard over the last two years to get themselves and the ship prepared for this day and they have exceeded their goals. I am very proud to be a part of this outstanding crew."

Bertholf will sail up the East Coast as far as Baltimore before leaving for its homeport. The ship is scheduled to arrive in Alameda at the end of July. *Bertholf's* Commissioning will be held on Aug. 4. The second NSC, CGC *Waesche* (WMSL 751), is approximately 60 percent complete and will be launched early next month. *Waesche's* Christening is scheduled for July 26. The third NSC will begin production this fall.

Last month the Coast Guard noted that most of the major deficiencies affecting the *Bertholf* had been or were close to being resolved (*Defense Daily*, May 28). The separate issue of TEMPEST certification for the *Bertholf's* classified communications and data network continues to be addressed with progress being made, the service officials said. Short-term testing and retesting will take place on and off until August when the next major long-term test occurs when the ship arrives at Alameda.