

Kittery; Shipyard abuzz after early visit by Tahoma

Two cutters will make Kittery their home port in September

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KITTERY, Maine — Although the official move of two new Coast Guard cutters to the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard will occur next month, a brief visit by the Tahoma is contributing to excitement around the yard.

The 270-foot Famous Class cutter Tahoma arrived at the shipyard on Thursday for a short stay during its midpatrol break, explained Coast Guard public affairs officer Dean Jones.

Such breaks are typical in a cutter's six-week to two-month patrol duty, Jones said, and are usually spent at a cutter's home port or another convenient port of call.

"It just depends on the logistics. I'm sure they chose Portsmouth because the families will be relocating there this fall," Jones explained.

The Coast Guard announced in April that the Coast Guard cutters Tahoma and Campbell would be reassigned to the shipyard from their current home port of New Bedford, Mass.

Both the Tahoma and the Campbell have about 100 crew members, and their families are moving to the Seacoast and enrolling at local schools in advance of the official home port change, tentatively scheduled for Sept. 27.

Shipyard Commander Capt. Kevin McCoy reiterated the shipyard's excitement over the impending arrival of

the two cutters during an interview Monday.

"The Navy and the Coast Guard have traditionally worked very well together, but especially since 9/11. We have received tremendous support from the Coast Guard. It's been a very mutually beneficial relationship," McCoy said.

"Relocation to the secure naval shipyard facility in Kittery will significantly enhance the force protection and security for these highly visible military units.

In addition, the U.S. Navy is waiving costs for cutter berthing and support services, resulting in \$1 million in savings in total life-cycle costs," the Department of Homeland Security and the Coast Guard said in a joint statement released in April.

McCoy said the decision to have Tahoma and Campbell join the Coast Guard cutter Reliance, whose home port is the shipyard, is great for homeland security and the Seacoast, and is an economically sound move.

"This is an opportunity to better utilize the full facilities we have here We have terrific facilities.

It makes terrific sense," McCoy said, noting the shipyard not only has pier space for the ships but also has the infrastructure to support crew members and their families moving to the area.

McCoy said he believes the crew members share the shipyard family's enthusiasm over this move.

"This will serve as another great opportunity for Portsmouth Naval Shipyard to contribute in defense of our nation and in support of the Department of Homeland Security," shipyard public affairs officer Deborah M. White said when the decision to move the cutters to the shipyard became public this spring.