

# KODIAK DAILY MIRROR

- Home
- Subscribe
- Marketplace
- Classifieds
- My Content
  - News
  - Opinion
  - Sports
  - Features
- Community
- Multimedia

[advance search](#)

[sign out](#)

[account preferences](#)

## As two U.S. Senators visit Kodiak, Coast Guard commandant outlines future of Kodiak-based ships

by James Brooks

Aug 06, 2012 | 32 views | 0 | 1 | |

With Congress on a five-week August break, Sens. Mary Landrieu (D-La.) and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) stopped in Kodiak on Monday to hold a Homeland Security appropriations subcommittee field hearing.

The committee oversees the Coast Guard's annual budget, and the hearing was an opportunity for the two senators to hear from Coast Guard commandant Adm. Robert Papp during a tour of

**Tack it up!**  
You can now put your display ads online with our new Fiyer Board!  
Call 486-3227 and talk to Dan or Jessica today!

**Your Business Or Event Could Be Here!**

[Click to expand](#)



Sens. Mary Landrieu (D-La.), left, and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) talk after the conclusion of a Homeland Security appropriations subcommittee hearing Monday, August 6, 2012 in Hangar Three at Air Station Kodiak. (James Brooks photo)



Adm. Robert Papp, commandant of the Coast Guard, is interviewed by a video crew from the TV series "Coast Guard Alaska" Monday, August 6, 2012 in Air Station Kodiak Hangar One. Papp visited Kodiak to meet with Sens. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and Mary Landrieu (D-La.) as well as Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano. (James Brooks photo)



Sens. Mary Landrieu (D-La.), left, and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) hold a Homeland Security appropriations

### Coast Guard Base Kodiak.

"I am thrilled to be here with the thousands, literally, of the largest Coast Guard station in the nation," Landrieu said during the meeting in Hangar 3.

While the senators and Adm. Papp referred to the history of Coast Guard with a nod to the mementos hanging on the hangar's walls, the main topic of discussion was what the future will bring for the Coast Guard in Alaska.

"We remain committed to Alaska, as borne out by our investments," Papp told the senators.

This summer, the four-year-old national security cutter Bertholf will visit Kodiak en route to the Arctic Ocean. In questioning, Murkowski asked Papp whether a new national security cutter (eight are planned for construction) will be based in Kodiak.

"It takes about 24 days, round-trip, to travel from California to (the Bering Sea)," Murkowski said. "That's 24 days that could be spent under way in the Bering Sea."

Papp did not answer the question directly in the hearing but later said in an interview that Kodiak will not receive a national security cutter. "In order to gain efficiencies with engineering staffs and other things, we've had to co-locate the national security cutters together because we have a smaller crew on the ship, but that's backed up by crew on shore," he said.

Kodiak isn't likely to see changes to its ships soon.

The 45-year-old high-endurance cutter Munro, based in Kodiak, is the youngest of the Coast Guard's last-generation big ships. The Coast Guard's 12 high-endurance cutters, mostly built in the 1960s, are being replaced by the eight national



Local display advertising by PaperG

Weather Forecast | Weather Maps | Weather Radar

### Search Our Marketplace

or Search by category

*subcommittee hearing Monday, August 6, 2012 in Hangar Three at Air Station Kodiak. (James Brooks photo)*



*The crew of Coast Guard Base Kodiak's "Metal Shark" patrol boat show off their vessel to a delegation including Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Robert Papp, District 17 commander Rear Adm. Thomas Ostebo, Sens. Mary Landrieu (D-La.), and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) Monday, August 6, 2012. (James Brooks photo)*



*Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-AK, stands by as the crew of Coast Guard Base Kodiak's "Metal Shark" patrol boat show off their vessel to a delegation including Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Robert Papp, District 17 commander Rear Adm. Thomas Ostebo, Sens. Mary Landrieu (D-La.), and Murkowski Monday, August 6, 2012. (James Brooks photo)*

security cutters. The Munro, as the youngest of the high-endurance ships, will not go away any time soon.

"I don't think it's likely soon, simply because we only have three of the national security cutters produced so far. Four and five have only just started construction and we haven't awarded No. 6 yet," Papp said. "It's probably going to be eight years to 10 years before we finally decommission all of the remaining (high-endurance cutters), and I think Munro would be one of the last to go."

That doesn't mean Kodiak will receive no new ships.

Also planned under the Coast Guard's building program are 25 offshore patrol cutters designed to replace the Coast Guard's medium-endurance boats. The offshore patrol cutters will be able to operate in the Bering Sea and the Gulf of Alaska, unlike the current medium-endurance ships.

"They just cannot take the conditions that are found in the Bering Sea and the Gulf of Alaska," Papp said during the hearing.

When the new ships are built — a contract for their construction isn't expected before 2015 — Papp said two will come to Alaska. "We have plans to station two of our OPCs in Alaska, hopefully here in Kodiak," he said. "Once Munro is decommissioned and the Alex Haley, we would backfill with two ships."

Arctic icebreakers were also a topic of discussion, but the estimated \$800 million to \$1 billion cost of a new icebreaker means no new construction is likely anytime soon. The Polar Star, a heavy icebreaker in dry dock, is expected to return to service next year.

Landrieu asked about the pros and cons of having the Coast Guard lease a ship, but Papp said that



The crew of Coast Guard Base Kodiak's "Metal Shark" patrol boat show off their vessel to a delegation including Sens. Mary Landrieu (D-La.) (right) and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) Monday, August 6, 2012. (James Brooks photo)

doesn't look like the best option. "If you build a ship and invest in it, it costs more over time," he said. "We are struggling right now to just have one polar icebreaker. We want to have Coast Guard-owned because we can rely on that."

Other discussions at the hearing involved oil spill response and law enforcement patrols to stop high seas drift net fishing. The senators also heard from Merrick Burden of the Marine Conservation Alliance, Mark Myers of the University of Alaska and Bruce Harland of Crowley Marine before beginning a tour of Base Kodiak with Papp.

The visit to Kodiak is the first stop on a four-day tour of Alaska for Landrieu, while Murkowski visited Kodiak shortly after a visit to the North Slope. The two senators arrived in Anchorage late Monday and are expected to travel next to the Coast Guard Cutter Bertholf near Cold Bay, accompanied by Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano.

[+ Share This Article](#) | [f](#) [t](#) [g+](#) [v](#)

#### similar stories

- [Coast Guard commandant visits Kodiak](#) | 12 months ago
- [No funding for Coast Guard's new cutters in 2013 budget](#) | 5 months ago
- [Coast Guard plans big summer deployment to the Arctic](#) | 5 months ago
- [Command changes](#) | 14 months ago
- [Kodiak's Sun'aaq Tribe to ask for Coast Guard land](#) | 24 days ago

Comments (0) Post a Comment

---

No Comments Yet

The Kodiak Daily Mirror encourages a lively exchange of ideas regarding topics in the news. Users are solely responsible for the content. Please keep it clean, respect others and use the 'report abuse' link when necessary. [Read our full user's agreement.](#)

