

A HISTORY OF ALASKA PATROL (ALPAT) AVIATION SUPPORT

by Sean M. Cross, CAPT, USCG (retired)

“A giant low-pressure system hovers over the Aleutian Chain in the North Pacific like a permanent hurricane, Earth’s version of Jupiter’s giant red spot, often blanketing the entire region with rain and fog or winds of up to 100 miles an hour or even greater. Despite all human courage and mechanical genius, the forces of nature in the Aleutians always call the turns. No general or admiral was as powerful as the weather.”

-- Brian Garfield, “The Thousand-Mile War”



PHOTO CAPTION (Larry Wombold): HH-52A #1427 deploying for a SAR case aboard USCGC CONFIDENCE in late-August 1970 – crew was LCDR Benjamin S. Beach; LCDR Frank H. Carman, Jr.; AE3 Ray G. Wadsworth and AD2 Lawrence A. Wombold.

The Beginning (1964-1971)

On 04 September 1964, the Coast Guard opened a new chapter after its 97 year operation of the famed ‘Bering Sea Patrol’ by renaming it the ‘Alaska Patrol’ or ALPAT.¹ Officials cited that the former name was not sufficiently descriptive of the modern Patrol’s many law enforcement and conservation tasks. Over the years, the tempo and scope of the Patrol’s work increased steadily, reflecting Alaska’s dramatic rise to Statehood in 1959. New responsibilities involved a wide arc from the Canadian border on the south to the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas and Arctic Ocean on the north.

The “Alaska Patrol” was a multi-purpose operation. It combined the enforcement of United States laws concerning the territorial sea, its contiguous fisheries zone, and its various international treaties and agreements with surveillance functions, scientific research collection and search and rescue included.ⁱⁱ In the early years, ALPAT utilized legacy cutters (without flight decks) with occasional involvement of flight-deck equipped icebreakers.

The 1960s was a time of tremendous growth in development of the helicopter and the ship-helicopter concept in both the Coast Guard and the Navy. The acquisition of the HH-52A helicopter and RELIANCE-class 210-foot cutters (and later the HAMILTON-class 378-foot cutters), led this evolution. A long range plan to address the obsolescence of the cutter fleet was undertaken in 1959.ⁱⁱⁱ The first post-war cutters were designed from the keel up to facilitate helicopter operations. LCDR John Redfield was largely responsible for the successful evaluation and implementation of the Coast Guard’s ship-helicopter concept in 1964.

Eventually, in 1969 (the newly assigned pilots arrived in May 1969), the Icebreaker Support Section (IBSEC) was established at ATC Mobile, AL to manage ship-helicopter operations.^{iv} IBSEC would evolve over the years into the Ship-Helicopter Operations Division (SHOPDIV) in 1973 (when the mission expanded to support ALPAT law enforcement patrols aboard high endurance cutters) and Polar Operations Division (POPDIV) in 1977 when the division returned its primary mission to icebreaker support and received the title.

In October 1970, the Coast Guard transitioned to orange livery for ALPAT and polar operations helicopters. Retired CAPT Bob Watterson stated “Much to my delight, about a year later, an all-orange HH-52A was delivered to IBSEC from ARSC! On its starboard side, behind the open door, was stenciled “Approved by Sunkist!” The decision had been made that since the number of helos (14) assigned to IBSEC was significant, these could be treated specially”.^v

On 26 January 1966, the first two HH-52As (#1409, #1410) arrived at Air Station Kodiak, AK^{vi} followed shortly in July 1966 by USCGC CONFIDENCE the first flight-deck equipped cutter assigned to Kodiak.^{vii} About a year later, on 18 March 1967, the first 378-foot high endurance cutter, HAMILTON, was commissioned with eleven more following through March 1972. These cutters would become Alaska Patrol’s surface fleet mainstays for the next 54 years.

It was the fixed-wing fleet that initially provided aviation support to the Alaska Patrol. The Grumman HU-16E Albatross amphibians assigned to Air Stations Kodiak and Annette Island spent most of their operational hours flying the “Alaska Patrol” that consisted of offshore sweeps of the lucrative fishing grounds from Dixon Entrance, at the extreme southern end of Alaska, to Cape St. Elias, at the northern end of the Gulf of Alaska and out the Aleutian Chain.

Author and Coast Guard Aviator Tom Beard recalled flying on an ALPAT deployment out of Air Station Barbers Point, HI in 1967.^{viii} Beard stated “This was sort of a rush-up mission as I recall. I was on the first mission beginning on 17 June 1967 from Barbers Point, flying HC-130B, # 1341, with Jim Webb as aircraft commander. We flew first to Kodiak, then Nome (with a log flight to Port Clarence), Adak, Shemya, and returning to Kodiak for our departure back to Barbers Point

on 03 July 1967. The same plane turned around the next day with a new crew (unknown) for another three-week patrol. We did catch a Russian trawler with nets full inside three miles. They dumped their load - leaving thousands of dead fish floating on the water - as they beat-foot for Vladivostok. The Coast Guard cutter we were supporting had gone into Charlie status with a maintenance issue and was unable to intercept. We could only fly overhead dropping message blocks saying to stop - without a backup. Bummer of a day. We patrolled the Bering Sea and the Aleutian Chain. Very efficient for search, but not so for capture without the surface backup. This happened before Kodiak got HC-130s in 1968.”

There are numerous examples of HH-52As landing on USCGC CONFIDENCE and even deploying aboard for extended or distant SAR missions, but research has yet to reveal systematic ALPAT law enforcement patrols with embarked AVDETs before October 1972.

The Concept Gains Traction (1972-1974)

With the arrival of the first HH-3F #1484 at Air Station Kodiak on 16 June 1972 – the HH-52As were re-assigned to other CONUS units, but the HH-3F was not authorized to land on either the 210 or 378-foot cutters.^{ix} Hence, on 08 October 1972, HH-52A #1383 (an Air Station Annette aircraft with IBSEC crew) landed aboard USCGC JARVIS – a 378-foot cutter homeported in Honolulu, HI – just off of Air Station Kodiak.^x They were known as LAWENF DET 1 and became the ship’s first ALPAT Aviation Detachment. The detachment consisted of:

LT John “Ron” R. Huddleston
LT William “Bill” P. Wolfe
AD1 E. M. Hawes
AT1 R. C. Lawson
AD2 R. A. Page
AM2 C. E. Hicks
AE2 D. B. Robertson

Unfortunately, this groundbreaking initial ALPAT helicopter deployment did not go well as JARVIS ran aground on 15 November 1976 during a severe storm and began taking on water. The engine room flooded, disabling the engines. Mountainous seas and gale force winds pounded JARVIS to the point that consideration was given to jettisoning the #1383 overboard due to stability concerns. Instead, the aircrew launched at night in 50 knot winds and near zero visibility in blowing snow to ferry as many of the ship’s 170 man crew to Akutan Island as possible. Shortly after the first landing at Akutan, JARVIS informed #1383 that personnel evacuation would not be necessary as a Japanese Fishing Vessel “Koyo Maru # 3” was on scene and taking JARVIS in tow to Dutch Harbor. #1383 supported JARVIS for the next three days out of Dutch Harbor delivering fuel, food, blankets, D17 and headquarters Damage Control experts, diving gear, divers and cement. On return trips, they evacuated sick and injured ship crewmembers and treated them to barbecued hamburgers, hot dogs and beer delivered by HC-130Bs from Kodiak.

LT Huddleston earned the Air Medal for this mission and subsequent JARVIS support flights - CITATION below.

Lieutenant HUDDLESTON is cited for meritorious achievement in aerial flight on the night of 15 November 1972 while serving as aircraft commander of Coast Guard HH-52A 1383 helicopter engaged in her successful launching under extremely hazardous conditions from the flight deck of the USCGC JARVIS (WHEC 725). The vessel was adrift without main propulsion in the Gulf of Alaska floundering in mountainous seas and at the mercy of high gusting winds and blowing snow. Lieutenant HUDDLESTON and a fellow pilot volunteered to fly the helicopter off the CGC JARVIS in hopes that the ship's stability would be improved by reducing topside weight and also, in the event of further exacerbation of the vessel's problems, that the helicopter would be available to evacuate ship's personnel. Shortly before midnight, with the wind blowing at about 50 knots, the ship rolling heavily and experiencing near zero visibility in blowing snow, the helicopter was safely launched under the direction of Lieutenant HUDDLESTON and flown to an isolated beach on the south side of Akutan Island, approximately 20 miles distant from the ship. After deplaning the crewmen on the beach, Lieutenant HUDDLESTON, disregarding his own personal safety, reported his readiness to begin evacuation of JARVIS personnel if it became necessary, despite increasingly hazardous weather conditions. Through his exceptional aeronautical skill, initiative and perseverance, he contributed to saving the aircraft while at the same time improving the ship's stability. He subsequently accomplished a total of 49 support missions during the emergency rehabilitation period of CGC JARVIS. Lieutenant HUDDLESTON's courage, sound judgment and unwavering devotion to duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Coast Guard.

No other awards associated with these missions have been located.

A more detailed account of the JARVIS incident above can be found in the book "All Present and Accounted For: The 1972 Alaska Grounding of the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Jarvis and the Heroic Efforts that Saved the Ship" by Steven J. Craig.

The story of LAWENF DET 1 deployment to JARVIS is well chronicled in an article titled "Ice Breaker Section Law Enforcement Detachment One, Alaska Patrol October-November 1972, USCGC JARVIS (WHEC 725)" by John Ronald (Ron) Huddleston, CDR, USCG, (ret.) from February, 2011. This 16 page document is the most detailed information regarding IBSEC supported ALPAT patrols from 1972-1975. However, the remainder of IBSEC supported ALPAT patrols from 1972-1975 are not as well documented.



PHOTO CAPTION (Paul Ibsen and internet research): ALPAT deployment patches for LE DETs 4, 5 and 7 in 1974 and 1975.

The table below summarized the known details that are available.^{xi}

Year	Det	Aircraft	Cutter	Aircrew	Dates
1972	LE DET 1	HH-52A #1383	USCGC JARVIS	LT J. R. Huddleston LT W. P. Wolfe AD1 E. M. Hawes AT1 R. C. Lawson AD2 R. A. Page AM2 C. E. Hicks AE2 D. B. Robertson	Oct-Nov 1972
1973	LE DET 2				
	LE DET 3				
1974	LE DET 4	HH-52A #1388	USCGC MUNRO***	LT J. F. "Frank" Gall	Jan-Jun 1972
	LE DET 5	HH-52A #1388	USCGC CONFIDENCE USCGC MIDGETT USCGC MELLON USCGC BOUTWELL	LT Paul Ibsen LT Jerry Sickafoose AD1 Turley (senior) AM1 Reed plus (3) others	Jun-Oct 1974
1975	LE DET 6				
	LE DET 7		USCGC MELLON***		'Summer' 1975

*** = information from patch

Interestingly, a 07 December 1973 report titled “Ship-Helicopter System Analysis” prepared for the U.S. Coast Guard by R. A. Egen, et al, Battelle Columbus Laboratories explains some of the issues faced by shipboard deployed helicopter crews and reinforces the facts that the Coast Guard was still learning a great deal about ship-helicopter operations. The report states^{xii}:

The limited standard navigational equipment of the H52, plus its single engine (in contrast to the H3, which has two engines), increase the possibility that engine trouble would force it to land in the ocean. Since a ship (particularly a 210) would have a difficult time finding it, an administrative decision has limited the H52 range to 25 miles from a 210 or 378, a distance representative of the range of the ship in about 1 hour. An improvement in the navigational capability of the H52 would remove this limit, probably leading to more effective use of the H52/ship combination. A TACAN unit is known to have been temporarily installed in an H52, enabling use with a 378 for a range far beyond 25 miles; the ship always knew the helicopter's exact location. Universal installation of such equipment seems to be precluded by cost and weight considerations at present.

and

Coast Guard data indicate that for ALPAT, 80 flight hours are accrued in about 63 days. Due to the minimal ship/helo ALPAT patrol experience, helicopter deployments aboard both ships are now limited to about 20 days and usually only in good weather seasons. There are no serious limitations to normal maintenance under those conditions.

and

A recent ALPAT deployment illustrates the need for improved maintenance and protective techniques if ship/helo patrols are to be extended to seasons of bad weather and rough seas. The helicopter in this case suffered heavy corrosion because the conditions were severe enough for over a week that no one could go on deck for servicing. It is reported that the ship was rolling to 40° and that the rotor blades were being dipped into the wave tops at times. The experience might have been prevented if the helicopter had been flown from the ship to a land station before bad weather developed. At the very least, the rotor blades should have been folded to avoid immersion in wave tops. Nonetheless, situations similar to this might call for more protection of the helicopter from the elements during ship/helo deployments in bad weather seasons.

Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (1975-1987)

On 13 April 1976, the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) was signed into law by President Gerald Ford. The act established a federal jurisdiction over marine fishery resources that are beyond state jurisdiction but within 200 miles of the U.S. coasts and

assigned enforcement responsibility to the U.S. Coast Guard. The law included several provisions to increase Coast Guard Aviation force laydown. Five HH-52 helicopters were assigned for deployment duties aboard Coast Guard cutters engaged in fishery patrols. Ten new HH-65 helicopters were procured to replace the HH-52s, resulting in a net increase of five Short Range Recovery helicopters in the Coast Guard inventory.^{xiii}

The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act went into effect on 01 March 1977. The Coast Guard began preparations in earnest as early as 1975 before the law was even signed. On page 3 of the January 1975 Flight Lines Magazine and article titled "Aviation Programs (OSR-2)"^{xiv} stated the following:

"The Coast Guard is not waiting for a 200 mile limit before pursuing an active program in off shore law enforcement. The utilization of helicopters aboard ships is increasing along all of our coastlines, as the advantages the ship/helo team has to offer become better known and procedures become more familiar. To aid in keeping watch over the large expanse of Alaska waters, an HH-52A allowance will be reestablished at Kodiak this Autumn for the purpose of deploying aboard Alaska Patrol (ALPAT) cutters. ALPAT support has been provided in the past by SHOPDIV, Mobile when the icebreaker schedule allowed, but could not be counted on for full time service to ALPAT or for any more than one vessel at a time. The additional helicopters will put CCGD17 in a much better position to watch over our fishing areas on a year round basis."

The first helicopter dedicated to full time Alaska Patrol (ALPAT) work, HH-52A #1397, arrived at Kodiak in December 1975 aboard USCGC MUNRO.^{xv} Research has been unable to uncover the exact date or the aircrew.

The second helicopter dedicated to full time Alaska Patrol (ALPAT) work, HH-52A #1378, arrived at Kodiak on 15 January 1976 aboard USCGC RUSH (from Air Station San Francisco) – pilots were James H. J. "Hank" Schaeffer and Donald F. Walker.^{xvi}

Finally, the third and final ALPAT helicopter, HH-52A #1392, arrived in Kodiak on 13 April 1976 aboard an unknown cutter (from Air Station Los Angeles) – pilots were LCDR Herbert L. Johnson and LT Mark E. Benjamin.^{xvii}

The first four Alaska Patrol pilots assigned to Air Station Kodiak were:

LT Thomas "Tom" "Boomer" E. Ross, III (Senior ALPAT Aviator)
LT Paul K. Gruver
LT Lewis C. Dunn
LT William "Scott" S. Jerrems

They arrived in Kodiak on 15 January 1976 from Air Station Traverse City, Air Station Chicago City, Air Station Savannah and Air Station Port Angeles to set up this new sub-unit.^{xviii}

At about the same time, the ALPAT HH-52A Maintenance Shop was established in Hangar 2 (the old reciprocating engine shop) and led by Shop Chief ADC Ken Norton. The following is a list of "ALPAT HH-52A Maintenance Shop Plankowners" put together on social media (it may not be all inclusive): AD1 Bob Luce, AE1 Red Ronning, AT1 Huey Smith, AD1 Ralph Junker, AM2 Wally Seelye, AT2 Harvey Cook, AM2 Joe Martell, AT2 Jeff Steadman, AM2 George Terry, AD1 Rich Klinnert, AD1 Doug Lashley (I believe he showed up later in 76), AM2 Tony Johnson, AM3 Scott Yackel, AE1 Mickey Snell and AD2 Terry Woodrow. ASM2 Derrick Mitchell was another name that came up as a great supporter of the ALPAT Shop.^{xix}

One pilot remarked, "We were all LTs which contributed to being the stepchildren of Air Station Kodiak. Our bosses were all C-130 pilots, and we had no H-52 Engineering Officer or Flight Safety Officer which contributed directly to a ground resonance incident on our first patrol on the MIDGETT in March 1976. Despite very limited shipboard-helicopter experience in CONUS waters, we were on our first winter patrols in Alaska within six-eight weeks of our arrival. C-130 and H-3 pilots at Kodiak were required to serve three months as copilots, regardless of their experience, before being designated as Alaska-qualified aircraft commanders."^{xx}

Tom Ross stated, "My first log book entry was in January 1976 testing #1378 and #1397. I did some flying in February and deployed on the JARVIS in March 1976. I was subsequently on the BOUTWELL and MIDGETT (twice). I will check other deployments. I was in a storm that got down to at least 940 millibars (27.76 inches) as I still have the printouts from the ship. Great area to fly. One of my main worries was how much damage was inflicted on the helicopter out on deck. At times it was a block of ice and at other times the blades would twist and lower to the deck. I actually sent a request asking how I could inspect for damage to the blades and the struts (they would lose their charge making us worry about ground resonance). Of course the only way to test its airworthiness was to fly again after a storm. Lots of interesting times flying with nothing but an ADF and only one place to land. We had a great initial bunch (pilots and enlisted) and had good support at Kodiak. There was certainly not enough planning before deciding to do this and we were all lucky we had no aviation mishaps."^{xxi}

The first OFFICIAL Alaska Patrol with a deployed helicopter AVDET from the Air Station Kodiak ALPAT Division was HH-52A #1397 aboard USCGC JARVIS from 27 February to 22 March 1976 (24 days) led by LT Tom Ross (Senior Aviator) and LT Scott Jerrems.^{xxii} The intent of this initial deployment was to evaluate shipboard helicopter operations and return quickly with lessons learned. JARVIS came to Kodiak for a mid-patrol break. At the time, LT Ross was involved with maintenance and evaluating pilot training and preparation for deployment.^{xxiii}

Research confirmed that there was no break-in period, initial guidance or training from the ATC Mobile IBSEC/SHOPDIV aircrews that had covered the mission from 1972-1976. One pilot interviewed stated, "That fall when I went to Mobile for my annual instrument training, my simulator instructor had an interesting "rest of the story". He had done a summer ALPAT the year before and ATC offered him and another ALPAT-experienced pilot to come to Kodiak and lead our first ALPATs. He said Kodiak refused the offer!"^{xxiv}

The second ALPAT HH-52A (#1378) deployment was aboard USCGC MIDGETT from 11 March to mid-April 1976 and led by LT Paul Gruver (Senior Aviator) and LT Lewis Dunn. Their Maintenance (Dream Team) was AT1 Gene Johnson, AD2 Ralph Junker, AM2 Wallie Sealey and PO3 Fawcett. There was no unit guidance, so each AVDET was left to develop its own.^{xxv}

Lewis Dunn stated:

“We flew an amazing 20 hours in March and early April before a ground resonance incidence put us out of commission. It was the wildest helicopter experience in my career. We had observed the 1378 being beaten up for several days by the Bering Sea weather and were concerned about its airworthiness (blade folding was not a safe operation/option on an open deck in winter). To involve the fewest people possible, we ran the helicopter solo. When the helicopter hit the rotor overspeed test (test 2), it immediately went into ground resonance throwing me off the flight controls and sending the maintenance crew and Paul Gruver diving for the balloon shelter and the flight deck nets. Fortunately, I had locked my harness which allowed me to quickly recover the collective and shut off the power (I still have one of the crushed honeycomb shock absorbers from one of the sponson struts).”^{xxvi}

To provide a sense of ‘battle rhythm’ for early ALPAT deployers - this was LT Tom Ross’ deployment schedule during his ALPAT tour^{xxvii}:

21 Jan 1976 test flew #1378 and #1397 (a week after arriving)

27 February 1976 landed #1397 aboard JARVIS for deployment; 22 March 1976 returned to Kodiak (24 days deployed – 24 days home)

15 April 1976 landed #1392 aboard BOUTWELL for deployment; 20 May 1976 returned to Kodiak (35 days deployed – 69 days home)

28 July 1976 landed #1392 aboard MIDGETT for deployment; 11 September 1976 returned to Kodiak (45 days deployed – 181 days home)

11 March 1977 landed #1397 aboard MIDGETT for deployment; 05 May 1977 returned to Kodiak (55 days deployed – 82 days home)

26 July 1977 landed #1378 aboard MIDGETT for deployment; 10 September 1977 returned to Kodiak (46 days)

The annual “Foreign Fishing Activities for the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska – 1976” prepared by the National Marine Fisheries Service Law Enforcement Branch in Juneau, AK summarized the impact of the first year succinctly: “(In 1976) Shipborne (HH-52A) helicopters increased their role aboard 378-foot Coast Guard cutters. They made 160 flights for a total of 319 flight hours—an increase of 82 percent.”

The next two groups of aviator arrived per the lists below:

1976-1978 ALPAT Pilots^{xxviii}

LT James "Jim" A. Brokenik (Savannah)

LTJG Bruce Steffens ***

LTJG Mike L. Stafford (Traverse City)

*** = departed 1977 - student engineering

1977-1979 ALPAT Pilots^{xxix}

LCDR William "Bill" S. Griswold

LT Michael A. Roberts

LT David K. Arnold

LT Joseph "Pete" P. MacDonald

LT John A. Pepe, Jr.

LTJG Steven L. Sparks

LT Dan D. Benefield

LT Mark E. Benjamin

LT James H. J. "Hank" Schaeffer

LTJG Robert "Bob" Breunig

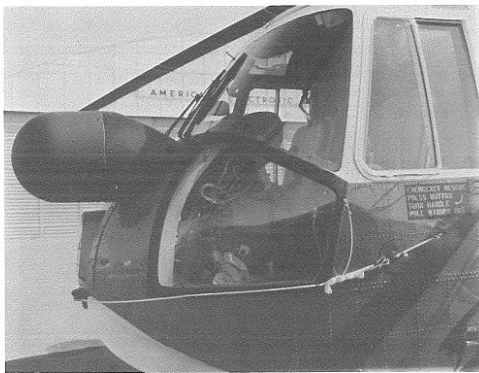
One early noteworthy event occurred during a deployment in October 1977 aboard USCGC RUSH. On 25 October 1977, Tropical Storm HARRIET slammed into the Aleutian Islands and the Alaskan peninsula, sending barometric pressure to record lows for Alaska (926.2 millibars). RUSH was north of Adak in the Aleutian chain and ran into 50-foot waves which damaged the HH-52A on the flight deck. Winds of 100 knots were recorded in the area. Robert "Bob" Breunig took this infamous ALPAT photo during the height of the storm. Mont Smith stated "Later, a wave breaking over the flight deck ripped one main rotor blade off the helicopter."^{xxx}



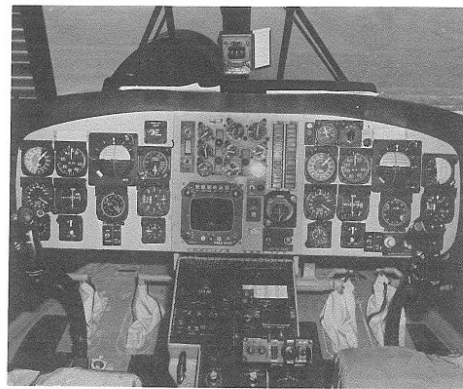
PHOTO CAPTION (Robert "Bob" Breunig): HH-52A aboard USCGC RUSH during Tropical Storm HARRIET in late-October 1977 in 50-foot seas and 100 knot winds.

In February 1978, the first HH-52B #1403 with Primus-40 WXD radar arrives in Kodiak - #1425, #1382, #1462 would follow later. The January 1978 - Flight lines, "OPSNotes" by CDR T. H. Hoffer stated "the installation of the Primus-40 radar in the ALPAT HH-52As is proceeding with the third installation underway as you read this. All four radar equipped aircraft should be in Alaska by the end of June 1978."^{xxx} Many pilots have referred to the HH-52A with Primus-40 WXR radar as an HH-52B.

Bill Peterson stated (from his experience in the early 1980s), "It was especially difficult when you had nowhere else to land in the Bering Sea as the cutter sailed into a squall line that took them way out of limits! Had to land an HH-52A on a wooden grid with manual tie downs...the deck crew was told if we landed to immediately leave the nets and tie us down. The deck crew unfortunately froze in the nets...my aircrew in the balloon shelter immediately ran to our rescue grabbing the high tie downs and saving us from dynamic roll over! Note - I offered to hoist the copilot and aircrew to the deck before attempting a landing and they declined. My plane captain (PO Weismann) really saved us as the port tie down was on as we rolled to port lifting the starboard wheel and sponson well off the deck! He jumped up with his foot on the sponson and snagged the tie down on the on the tie down eye and in one motion secured it! We crashed back down on deck and he took the slack out as we shut her down! Three lives saved as the cutter told us before our approach that the seas were too rough for a small boat launch and recovery...Cutter CO was a great leader as our hot wash was revealing as Combat and the Bridge were in a pissing contest about the weather and recovery of us early from the patrol. The flight deck crew was scared as the sea state was reaching them in the nets but they didn't speak up! The LSO wasn't even qualified but a new Ensign trainee as none of the LSOs wanted any part of the recovery! By the Grace of God we made it and no one was injured! The CO sent a great safety message and gave a great presentation to the next PCO/PXO ship helicopter conference."^{xxxii}



This is a picture of a Kodiak HH-52A that is assigned to the Alaskan Patrol. The unusual protrusion that you see in the picture is the RADOME for the PRIMUS-40WXR Weather Radar that is installed on the aircraft.



In this picture you can see how the Radar Screen is positioned on the instrument panel. Also you can see the RADOME in front of the co-pilot's window.

PHOTO CAPTION (Flight lines, January 1978): "OPSNotes" depicting the installation of the Primus-40 radar in the ALPAT HH-52A – some referred to this alteration as the HH-52B.

On 16 December 1987, the last HH-52B #1462 departed from Air Station Kodiak and ALPAT mission support responsibility shifted to the H-65 Dolphin (series) helicopter. The last ALPAT HH-52B aircraft commander was likely Terk Williams.^{xxxiii}

The Age of the Dolphin (1988-2024)

The first HH-65A operational unit, Air Station New Orleans, began to stand the duty on 11 September 1985, but the first ALPAT airframe (#6515) did not arrive in Kodiak until around 28 February 1988 (first logged flight was 29 February 1988). Word on the street is that the initial four were delivered via HC-130H – the confirmed tail numbers were 6515, 6526, 6538 and 6522). I heard from several people that HH-65A parts were in short supply at this time and 6522 was not in many logbooks because it was cannibalized to keep the other three aircraft flying. LT Wayne Luginbuhl, ARSC accompanied the 6515 and provided warm-up flights for the cadre of HH-65A pilots and crewmen.

It took several interviews to piece this together, but there were essentially two distinct groups (with some overlap) that moved the ALPAT HH-65A program forward. First, a small cadre of HH-52A pilots and mechanics qualified in the HH-65A and maintained the reins on the transition plan from January to June 1988.

One of those pilots was LT Phil Bray - the ALPAT Engineering Officer for both the HH-52A and HH-65A (1986-88). His right hand man on the hangar deck for the transition was ADCS Rick Riddell. The initial batch of ALPAT HH-65A plankowner pilots that took the ALPAT HH-65A program from the departure of the last HH-52A in December 1987 to the 1988 summer transfer season were: Phil Bray, Ronald S. Leidner, Don Wright, LCDR Theodore "Ted" C. LeFeuvre (ALPAT Senior Aviator), LT Anthony "Tony" J. Kovac and LTJG Larry Cornwell (LeFeuvre and Kovac arrived from Air Station New Orleans).

The initial batch of HH-65A plankowner mechanics and aircrew were (again, this list may not be all inclusive): Rich Shultz, John Bush and Skip Wallace, Mike Gill, Danny Jackson, Ian McCaleb, AT1 Chris Bishop, Brad McDonald, Brian Smith, Chris Wagner, AM2 Gary McLean and AE2 Mike Vaughn.

By the April of 1988, ALPAT was 'mission capable' with the HH-65A and ready to deploy. There were originally eight pilots and four aircraft that deployed almost exclusively on Pacific Area 378s. The original eight pilots were LCDR Theodore "Ted" C. LeFeuvre, LT Arthur "Jerry" J. Lamontagne, LT Richard "Rick" A. Stanchi, LTJG Larry E. Cornwell, LT Anthony "Tony" J. Kovac, LT Joseph M. Hanson, LTJG Mark S. Fretwell and LT Charlie Ray.^{xxxiv}

The first ALPAT HH-65A (#6515) cutter deployment (01-88) was aboard the USCGC MIDGETT from 10 May to 26 May 1988^{xxxv} with pilots LCDR Theodore "Ted" C. LeFeuvre (Senior Aviator), and LT Ronald S. Leidner.

The second ALPAT HH-65A (#6538) deployment (02-88) was aboard the USCGC MIDGETT from 31 May through 22 June 1988^{xxxvi}. The crew initially consisted of LT Donald R. Wright (Senior Aviator), LTJG Larry E. Cornwell, AD2 M. Richardson (Plane Captain), AT2 S. Begin, AM3 A. Wallace and AE3 M. Wagner. On 4 June 1988, the aircraft was flown to Kodiak to repair a vertical speed indicator and complete a copilot swap, LT A. J. Kovac for LTJG Cornwell.

The third ALPAT HH-65A (#6515) deployment (03-88) was aboard the USCGC MIDGETT from 29 June through 15 July 1988^{xxxvii}. The crew consisted of LT L. E. Cornwell (Senior Aviator), LT A. J. Lamontagne, ASM1 J. J. Schill (Plane Captain), AT3 S. Miller, AM3 Berkenbile and AE3 B. Foster. According to the maintenance notes (see 03-88 maintenance notes attached), a one-time flight to Dutch Harbor was authorized to accomplish an engine change. With the change complete, problems necessitated that new engine be changed as well. Subsequently, the aircraft returned to service and rendezvoused with the MIDGETT.

The 1988 ALPAT HH-65A Division had “a stellar crew of maintainers” led by ADCS Rick Riddell and ADC Mark T. Bigart (later the Enlisted Ancient Albatross) and later AETCS Ron Anderson; all three incredible leaders and super professional aviation maintenance experts. Numerous people stated they were “hesitant to name names of the great mechanics because they were all great” but a few names came up over and over again: AM2 Ricky Reed, AD2 Mike Richardson, AE1 Ken Sampson, AM2 Chris Wagner and AM2 Obie Riley.^{xxxviii}

The Air Station Kodiak Commanding Officer, CAPT Mont Smith, was described by several people as a great supporter of ALPAT. He thoroughly understood the risks of the ALPAT missions and supported his ALPAT aircrews 100% in dealing with other operational leaders in the chain. CDR Blaine Brinson was the Operations Officer while CDR Jim Rao and CDR Don Estes were the Engineering Officers for the first two years. LCDR Tom Gordon was the AEO and another great ALPAT supporter.^{xxxix}

HH-65As had availability challenges from the start due primarily to the LTS-101 engines. ALPAT HH-65As were not immune to the growing pains of anticipator motors, engine matching and other LTS-101 engine reliability issues plaguing the fleet at the time including a bad habit of the single-piece compressor failing catastrophically. These issues demanded almost continual non-destructive inspection of power turbine wheels due to the real threat of material failure and blade separation. The idea of losing an engine beyond range of shore over water that was right around 32° F was sobering indeed.^{xl} There came a point when ground runs were required for maintenance procedures at an accelerated pace. Topping and power assurance procedures became so regular that pilots could recite the procedure from memory as the flight mechanic tried to avoid contact burns from putting the “topping bullet” in place on the running motor. This all was required in order to forecast when engines were not making enough power and were required to be changed. It happened frequently.

When Coast Guard Aeronautical Engineering developed a solution for this root cause and laid out the original implementation schedule, ALPAT was not at the top of the list. CAPT Mont Smith exhibited incredible leadership and took on significant personal career risk when he

canceled all deployments until ALPAT received the parts and procedures to implement the solution. Several people interviewed firmly believed he saved Coast Guard lives with that courageous stance.^{xlii} Like the rest of the fleet, the crew wrestled with the problems the best they could and readied the aircraft for shipboard deployments.

During the first two years of HH-65A ALPAT support - the missions were broken into three major areas:

First, traditional ALPATs were still the primary mission and involved initial work ups with the cutters in the vicinity of Kodiak and followed by a two to three month deployment to the Bering Sea (with a mid-patrol crew swap). Port calls were typically either Dutch Harbor or Adak; both of which made for interesting liberty at times. Occasionally, ALPAT aircrews would fly from Kodiak to Dutch Harbor to meet cutters coming up from the west coast. This was a long flight (approximately 800 miles) over the mountains of the Alaska Peninsula and along a barren Alaska Coast. This transit would typically involve an HC-130H escort and wing-to-wing refueling at Port Heiden (about halfway out the Alaska Peninsula on the Bering Sea-side) as fuel was not always available.

The objective of these ALPATs was to patrol for foreign fishing vessel excursions into the EEZ near the Donut Hole. The Donut Hole is an international zone about the size of Alabama in the middle of the Bering Sea between the fishery zones of the U.S. and Russia – centered between Adak, AK and Cape Navarin, Russia. The Alaska pollock, North America's most abundant and lucrative fishery, flourishes in this area. Alaska Pollock makes up about 40% of the total U.S. fisheries landings, with a gross value of more than U.S.\$1 billion annually making it the world's largest human food fishery. Numerous large international factory trawlers drag these international waters relentlessly and often venture into the U.S. fishing zone.



PHOTO CAPTION (Rick Stanchi): ALPAT mechanic AM2 Chris Wagner is credited with conceptualizing and manufacturing blade restraining devices. This new equipment precluded pulling the blades in winds up to about 90 knots.

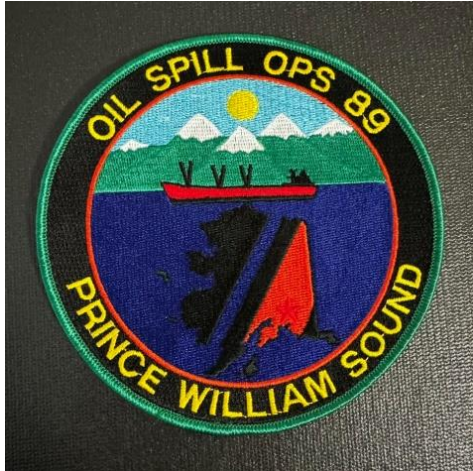
Also, deployed aircrews usually responded to at least one SAR incident per patrol on either a fishing vessel or one of the countless merchant vessels transiting Unimak Pass on a Great Circle Route from Asia. During most of the first two years, ALPAT HH-65As deployed aboard "Pre-FRAM" 378s with no hangar or TALON grid for ship-helicopter operations. The weather was always pretty "sporty" and when winds were forecast for over 75 knots the main rotor blades were removed every day. These early deployments were intense learning experiences.

During year two of the HH-65A, operations shifted to High Seas Drift Net enforcement. These deployments centered in the North Pacific, usually closer to Japan than to Alaska and aircrews regularly demonstrated genius and creativity to maintain availability to support the mission far from home. It was a unique mission that required longer deployments and substantial cooperation and teamwork from many other Pacific-region Coast Guards. ALPAT crews got very proficient at breaking down an HH-65A for HC-130H transport from Japan, Hawaii or any other Pacific port. One pilot noted that an ALPAT HH-65A sent via HC-130H to Naval Air Facility Atsugi Japan may have been the first Coast Guard helicopter to fly in Japan and/or Asia.



PHOTO CAPTION (Rick Stanchi): An ALPAT HH-65A was the second aircraft on-scene (5 minutes behind an HH-3F) to the EXXON VALDEZ spill. An ALPAT HH-65A landed on EXXON VALDEZ while it was still stuck on Bligh Reef. An EXXON VALDEZ life ring found its way to Aviation Support Facility Cordova and was eventually signed by all aircrews.

Finally, on 24 March 1989, the oil tanker EXXON VALDEZ ran aground in Prince William Sound, AK, spilling 11 million gallons of crude oil into a pristine wilderness area. One pilot stated, “The response to the EXXON VALDEZ was a significant mission that ALPAT was front and center on because we could land on ships, floating hotel helo pads and almost any beach.” Beginning shortly after the EXXON VALDEZ grounded, ALPAT spent several months almost exclusively devoted to that mission. As the oil spill spread and more and more people were deployed for clean-up operations, ALPAT HH-65A helicopters provided the logistics support to get them where they needed to be, provide SAR coverage and cutter support. There was at least one high or medium endurance cutter in Prince William Sound for months and the ship-helicopter team was a big part of the Coast Guard's effort. ALPAT helicopters also operated out of Aviation Support Facility Cordova – which many stated is one of the best kept secrets in the Service if you like to fish! Cordova became an aviation hub for a number of Coast Guard, Marine Corps, Army and National Guard helicopters during that spring, summer and fall. Apparently, John Denver provided a free concert at Aviation Support Facility Cordova hangar. ALPAT HH-65As flew numerous VIPs including Vice President Dan Quayle, Secretary of Transportation Samuel Skinner, Alaska Senator Frank Murkowski, President of Exxon Shipping Frank Iarossi and the Coast Guard Commandant Admiral Paul Yost.



Beginning 1985 and ending in 1992, the entire HAMILTON-class/378-foot cutter fleet was modernized through the Fleet Rehabilitation And Modernization (FRAM) program. The program included updates and changes to the cutters weapons, sensors, the addition of a helicopter hangar, engine overhauls, and improved habitability. A retractable hangar was installed on the Flight Deck to provide shelter for helicopter storage and maintenance requirements. The former Balloon Shelter was incorporated into the hangar area and the after spaces on the 01 level were reconfigured to accommodate a fairly sizeable Aviation Workshop. The deployed ALPAT H-65 would now be sheltered in a secure, warm, dry environment. This new environment also expanded the number and complexity of H-65 maintenance procedures that could be accomplished underway.



The other major innovation that greatly impacted ALPAT ship-helicopter operations was introduction of the Fairey Hydraulics developed “deck lock” or TALON Hydraulic Helicopter/Shipboard Securing System. The TALON deck landing system is utilized by all H-65 series helicopters. It consists of a helicopter mounted hydraulic probe and a six-foot diameter shipboard mounted honeycombed grid. After the helicopter touches down, the probe is activated by the pilot to engage the grid. The probe contacts and locks into the

grid by applying and maintaining a hold-down force. This new system eliminated the need to have cutter tie-down crews out on the pitching and rolling flight deck under spinning rotor blades during operations in heavy sea states. The TALON grids were installed on all the HAMILTON-class cutters between 1991 and 1993.^{xliii} The H-65 TALON systems were installed between 1988 and 1994.

Joe Kimball stated (from his experience in the mid-1990s) , “there were some nights, before NVGs, when the cutter was “at” limits with zero illumination (we’re talking darker than the inside of a cow) and you miss the grid by two inches. Seeing ‘Talon Locked’ advisory light was a beautiful thing. But there were nights when the flight deck was so squirrely; it felt like threading a needle while driving through a toll booth at 60 mph. So when you did miss the Talon grid, the LSO would lift his/her arms like a happy little no-stress butterfly.... (Dear helicopter pilot, please lift and reposition your 8500 pound machine two inches to the left - not knowing you had only 203 pounds of fuel because you waited for the cutter to “find the right course to get within limits.”) Scott Kitchen taught me, just shut down the engines, let the tie-down crews secure it on deck. Best advice ever! I thought Talon was a great innovation and probably saved more than a few helicopters/crews from rollover. Yes, we over-torqued more than a few while trying to lift the cutter out of the water. It was a small price to pay for safely

securing the helicopter on deck in some crazy sea states. I am continually amazed by Coast Guard innovation.^{”xliii}

The last MH-65D ALPAT Cutter Deployment was completed by #6509 aboard USCGC ALEX HALEY - the “Bulldog of the Bering”. The 45-day winter Bering Sea patrol ended on 29 January 2024. The last MH-65D ALPAT detachment consisted of: LCDR Robby Chavez, LT Conor Regan, AMT1 Garrison Labarre, AET2 Zach Mumford, AMT2 Ben Burgin and AST3 Braxton Gruner.

LCDR Robby Chavez was the last ALPAT MH-65D Senior Aviator and AMTCS Nick Baisden was the last Senior Enlisted Member.

On 23 April 2024, Air Station Kodiak discontinued MH-65D support for the ALPAT mission. The last MH-65D #6589 departed on 25 April 2024. ALPAT mission support responsibility shifted to the MH-60T Jayhawk helicopter.

ALPAT Aircraft Maintenance

“The planes will break and they'll get fixed and break again. What's important are the people around you.”

-- Frank Nicasio

The stories of Coast Guard aircraft maintainers "keeping engines burning and rotors turning" on ALPAT helicopters are amazing. Far from home base, in isolated locations, in facilities that were less than ideal...dilapidated hangars, no hangar, challenging weather conditions, lacking proper tools and completing ingenious "McGyver'esque" makeshift repairs to "keep 'em flying". These were the main forward operating locations where aircraft were flown off the cutter for repairs or complex maintenance procedures.

Naval Air Facility (NAF) Adak, AK - this facility closed on 31 March 1997, but before that seemed to be the destination of choice for mid-patrol breaks (MPBs) - with DoD contract fuel, infrastructure, MWR, hangars (heating and lighting) and GSE. NAF Adak even had a McDonalds. This was also home of the infamous 1970s manual transmission "Scooby Doo" van that was used to transport numerous ALPAT aircrews^{xliv}.

Cold Bay, AK - the original hangar was owned by Frosty Fuel (a subsidiary of Reeves Aleutian Airways) but later owned by Evergreen. A mechanic remarked, “The hangar we used there was called the Evergreen hangar. During my first tour in Kodiak 2004-2006, that hangar was pretty bad too. It had a nice powered accordion style door but that was about the only nice part. Lighting was inadequate and there was no heat. Insulation was literally falling off the ceiling and I probably have asbestos poisoning from there. We had to use torpedo heaters to keep it warm. You could fit a 60 and a 65 in there if you were careful but that was always a ground mishap waiting to happen. They finally put some money into the hangar and when I went back to

Kodiak for my second tour in 2014-2018, the lighting was great and it had a heating system installed^{xlv}.”

One item that came up over and over again regarding the Cold Bay hangar was “the berm.”

One pilot stated “I heard there were some innovative uses of ATVs and rope to help pull the H65 over the berm in Cold Bay. Wind there was insane - I remember having to hover taxi several times because the winds were too strong to ground taxi.”

Another pilot remarked, “It was out of the wind - all the comforts of home. They had room in an unheated dirt floor hangar with bi-fold doors that had to stay open. No tug and the door opening had a small berm probably to keep water out. After three attempts to push the plane over the berm, we got it over the top. Yep, the berm has a down slope too. Gravity did its thing and it started rolling. [Our mech] was quick to react and jumped in to discover the accumulator was at zero! Again, [our mech] was quick and hit the batteries and pumped the system to allow braking. The actual maintenance went smoothly and we charged the actuator before pushback.^{xlvi}”

This facility was replaced with a new state of the art hangar labeled Forward Operating Location (FOL) Cold Bay in October 2017.

Rumor is that Cold Bay's best known couple was Bill and Mary Martin - the owners and proprietors of the Cold Bay Lodge (also heard - Aleutian Lodge) an abandoned u-shaped FAA housing and dining facility that they purchased and turned into a hunting and fishing lodge that was frequented by numerous ALPAT aircrews. I also heard about aircrews hanging out at the Alaska State Trooper House in Cold Bay.

Dutch Harbor, AK - hangar was owned by PenAir (Peninsula Airways) and was located next to the existing WWII hangar. This hangar provided shelter, but was unheated and often presented challenges during extended maintenance when procedures were often interrupted by PenAir aircraft movements. A mechanic remarked, “the doors were not powered and a Coast Guard mechanic was injured once when a door slung open from the wind and sent him flying. Poor lighting and no heat.”

LORAN Station, St. Paul Island, AK - was considered a mixed bag - the unit itself was always welcoming and provided a galley, a club, a gym and extensive barracks lodging. However, the hangar facility was another property owned by Frosty Fuel (a subsidiary of Reeves Aleutian Airways) and was in horrible condition and in disrepair. One mechanic described it as “a mess to operate out of with no heat or electricity.” Another said, “St. Paul was by far the worst in my opinion. Again manual doors and no heat. This was the worst place to do maintenance at since it was usually 40 below zero.^{xlvii}” Finally, “we had to use a 7/16 socket jammed into the hangar door fuse box, (nicely placed right above the door in hangar rafters) while Andy Wischmeier sat in the fuel truck with the heater on for three hours cause it was "Really, really cold out there".

Crews made occasional visits and RON stops to conduct aircraft inspections at Air Force Station Shemya, LORAN Station Attu and King Salmon.

Conclusion

Inarguably, a common experience amongst all ALPAT crews included the hardship. Nothing was ever really easy about putting a helicopter on the back of a cutter (especially pre-FRAM) and flying in some extreme conditions. Many of those interviewed discussed the ALPAT team as early innovators - primarily because of cutter configuration and the mission elements, especially in the early years of both the HH-52A and the HH-65A. The time-tested approaches used for the HH-52A were of relatively little use for the HH-65A. One nugget discovered when looking for content was the ALPAT axiom of, "when the going gets rough for the average man, it's just about right for the ALPAT man".

Another important aspect of ALPAT worth emphasizing is camaraderie. ALPAT was always a "tight group" – Team ALPAT worked together, played together and stuck together. Retired Captain Dave Spillman described the ALPAT shop's amazing attitude of "we're in this together, us against the world." He further conveyed:

"Shortly after I arrived in Kodiak as EO in 1996, I was driving in to town one day and came upon a car with a flat tire - young woman and small child inside. I pulled up behind them and had just gotten out the jack when another car pulled up behind me. A young AD3 told me that he could change the tire. I said that I didn't mind changing a tire and he said, "You don't get it Commander. This is one of our ALPAT wives. Her husband's deployed. Get out of here. I'm changing her tire! I got it then and left. That was my intro to the ALPAT shop and their fierce support of each other was a constant inspiration for me."

Several of those interviewed also mentioned the advent and sustained tradition of painting the avionics bay panels to capture the spirit of a deployment. There are photos out there somewhere of these panels and of the ALPAT interior hangar door glass being repainted to recreate the theme of a particular deployment. These should be collected and not lost to history.

Finally, on the camaraderie front, there is a great story about the ALPAT night check taking LT Charlie Ray's (ALPAT EO at the time, but future Vice Commandant of the Coast Guard) ballcap hostage after he left it in the aircraft after a night flight. Few things other than flight gear were exempt from the perils of a robust 'gear adrift protocol'. It's a great story, replete with ransom notes and payouts. This may sound "sophomoric" to some, but to the ALPAT team this was part of the culture – this was part of their identity.

Bill Peterson did a great job explaining the value proposition of ALPAT to the Coast Guard and the Nation:

“CDR Wolfe talked to me about flying ALPAT and that the Ship-Helo manual was the Bible. He was adamant that it would be the most environmentally challenging flying I would experience, especially off the Cutters! He was right! I think that your assessment of having Alaska knowledgeable pilots in Kodiak for ALPAT is spot on...it is an unforgiving environment and very specialized ship-helicopter interface. Plus, the ALPAT Pilots in the Operations Department were fisheries experts...we handled all the HC-130H fisheries patrols and coordinated with all the cutters, many that we deployed on. Several ALPAT cutters would request ALPAT pilots to augment their Operations Department even when a helicopter was not assigned! We put together the seizure packages and worked very closely with Alaska NMFS agents and the Anchorage Federal prosecutors. We were the link that made the cutter interface work with the Air Station...”

###



*Brothers of the Tusk! The time has come,' the Walrus said,
To talk of many things:
Of shoes — and ships — and sealing-wax —
Of cabbages — and kings —
And why the sea is boiling hot —
And whether pigs have wings.'*

--Kevin Russell

ALPAT Search & Rescue (SAR) Milestones - the following are selected ALPAT SAR milestone events that demonstrate missions in the most extreme remote regions of our nation in harsh conditions to safeguard lives at sea.

ALPAT SAR Milestone 1

TODAY IN COAST GUARD AVIATION HISTORY – 28 FEBRUARY 1979: an HH-52B #1462 assigned to the Alaska Patrol (ALPAT) division at Air Station Kodiak, AK and crewed by LCDR William "Bill" C. Griswold (AC); LT Michael A. Roberts (CP) and AD1 King "Edward" E. David (FM) launched at night in response to the 72-foot crabber SIRIUS with seven persons aboard - aground on Cape Douglas Reef, without power, taking on water and being pounded to pieces by the surf.

Link:

<https://www.facebook.com/sean.m.cross.3/posts/pfbid06CiWdVwmjahsgyyczVappw2qgKGLbYEThR6hN3WH8Dn3zfi62z2B1SwUXdP6W1Xnl>

ALPAT SAR Milestone 2

TODAY IN COAST GUARD AVIATION HISTORY – 30 JULY 1982: an HH-52A #1425 assigned to the Alaska Patrol (ALPAT) division at Air Station Kodiak, AK but deployed aboard USCGC MELLON – a 378-foot high endurance cutter – and crewed by LT Bill Peterson (AC); LT Mike Wallace (CP) and AM2 Jeff Smith (FM - the rest of the ADVET consisted of AD3 Hissom, AT3 Jordan, and AM3 Hassinger) launched in response nine survivors from a Coast Guard HC-130H #1600 that crashed on a logistics mission to the remote Coast Guard Long Range Aid to Navigation (LORAN) Station on Attu Island, AK.

Link:

<https://www.facebook.com/sean.m.cross.3/posts/pfbid02bDrwo2ALRdX3RAATNJJVLL7QQXKR18foCqwrbl1cwyN1rVUGxD9sRQP2j9Kjhnl>

ALPAT SAR Milestone 3

TODAY IN COAST GUARD AVIATION HISTORY - 02 MARCH 1991: an HH-65A #6518 assigned to the Alaska Patrol (ALPAT) division at Air Station Kodiak, AK, deployed aboard USCGC MUNRO - a 378-foot high endurance cutter - and crewed by LCDR Paul S. Neeld (AC); LT Gerald 'Gerry' R. Dostie (CP) and unknown aircrew launched at maximum gross weight, in complete darkness to medevac a ship's doctor with a double compound arm fracture from the 570-foot Russian freighter NIZHNEYANSK. Challenging conditions that included the flight deck pitching and rolling at maximum allowable limits, 400-foot ceilings and one-mile visibility in snow showers.

Link:

<https://www.facebook.com/sean.m.cross.3/posts/pfbid0BN4Wu1g2PpX4Xngx1eYvbyTZ6abQpcoynoCs36CLeyYgjJ4XAsmwuEbhvNAjLoqtI>

ALPAT SAT Milestone 4 – 22 September 1992 (F/V MAJESTIC)

TODAY IN COAST GUARD AVIATION HISTORY - 22 SEPTEMBER 1992 (1 OF 3): an HH-65A #6537 assigned to the Alaska Patrol (ALPAT) Division at Air Station Kodiak, AK, but forward deployed to USCGC RUSH and crewed by LT Kip M. Walton (AC); LCDR James R. Hasselman (CP) and ASM2 Donald E. MacIntyre (FM) launched under extremely difficult and perilous conditions to investigate an EPIRB 70 miles south of St. Paul Island, 120 miles from RUSH. En route to scene, the aircrew learned the EPIRB was registered to the 70-foot halibut long line vessel MAJESTIC with five persons aboard.

Link:

<https://www.facebook.com/sean.m.cross.3/posts/pfbid02zgyL5HPBJLxhdT5foWpmGKVnTUtNmw1wicHMQLfWCsjNYa6gBMizyTXzctbSEwWgl>

ALPAT SAT Milestone 5 – 13 May 1993 (F/V RESPONSE)

TODAY IN COAST GUARD AVIATION HISTORY -13 MAY 1993: two HH-65As #6541 and #6514 assigned to the ALaska PATrol (ALPAT) Division at Air Station Kodiak, AK and crewed by:

6541 (Primary - first on-scene):

LT Chris Martino (AC)

LT Rick Capps (CP)

AD2 Michael Harder (FM)

ASM2 Ron Tremain (RS)

6514 (Backup):

LT Tim Rourke (AC)

Unknown (CP)

AM2 Chris Wagner (FM)

No rescue swimmer

launched in challenging conditions heavy fog, 75 foot ceiling and 400 yard visibility, in response to the 130-foot steel longline cod fishing vessel RESPONSE with 14 persons aboard being consumed by fire off of Cape Chiniak near Kodiak.

Link:

<https://www.facebook.com/sean.m.cross.3/posts/pfbid02HYQpvBAvnybHoBG8j1hCQysuoyEVTsYv2ykXCQAibdpEkfU7ir3gMLk28qJAhow6l>

ALPAT SAR Milestone 6

TODAY IN COAST GUARD AVIATION HISTORY - 01 FEBRUARY 1994: an HH-65A #6514 assigned to the Alaska Patrol (ALPAT) division at Air Station Kodiak, AK and deployed aboard USCGC RUSH - a 378-foot high endurance cutter - and crewed by LT Tim Rourke (AC); LT Doug Kaup (CP) and AM3 Anthony Johnson launched at night and at ship pitch and roll limits (☺) to assist the 91-foot fishing vessel BELAIR, reported aground on the south side of St. George Island (75 miles away), its six man crew abandoning ship.

Link:

<https://www.facebook.com/sean.m.cross.3/posts/pfbid02HVkuDswpfRVjT5h7zYZU195ZCH9MHAkZqyQNogZ9mN5KRZqKJ9wYtL2Ynfh7goNsl>

ALPAT Tragedy 1

TODAY IN COAST GUARD AVIATION HISTORY - 30 JUNE 1995: an Island Air Piper Saratoga single engine aircraft full of Air Station Kodiak, AK ALaska PATrol (ALPAT^^^)^ members returning from a Karluk River fishing trip crashed while transiting Anton Larson Pass. Weather was the primary factor. Pilot Chris Canfield and Coast Guardsmen ADC Doug Cooper, AE1 Danny Jackson & AD2 Rod Parsons all perished.

Link:

<https://www.facebook.com/sean.m.cross.3/posts/pfbid02Y8yXupmKfWxiEq3WSK16zYdxDhtagikGMhxV1y8dspXEGeg7236pyA46hKZFH3Udl>

ALPAT SAR Milestone 7

TODAY IN COAST GUARD AVIATION HISTORY - 11 FEBRUARY 2000 (2 OF 3): an HH-65A #6526 assigned to the Alaska Patrol (ALPAT) division at Air Station Kodiak, AK but deployed aboard USCGC MELLON and crewed by LCDR Mike Tanner (AC); LT Andy Myers (CP) and AST1 Scott Harris (FM) launched at night in response to the 154-foot fishing vessel AMERICAN STAR on fire with five persons and a dog aboard during a severe winter gale, with severe turbulence, less than 1/8-mile visibility, and freezing rain.

Link:

<https://www.facebook.com/sean.m.cross.3/posts/pfbid0yszFhieQqbPvZBFdesutdMbA3ENua3Fs9UWmasSPsHxK3V81yexr9CGP7HwTlx2Hl>

ALPAT SAR Milestone 8

TODAY IN COAST GUARD AVIATION HISTORY - 08 DECEMBER 2004 (***)VIDEO - links at bottom(***)): an HH-60J #6020 assigned to Air Station Kodiak, AK and crewed by LT David Neel (AC); LT Doug Watson (CP); AMT2 Brian Lickfield (FM) and AST3 Aaron Bean (RS) along with an HH-65B #6513 assigned to the Alaska Patrol (ALPAT) division at Air Station Kodiak, AK, but deployed aboard USCGC ALEX HALEY - a 283-foot medium endurance cutter homeported in Kodiak, AK - and crewed by LT Tim Eason (AC); LT Rob Kornexl (CP) and AMT3 Gregory Gibbons (FM) launched in response to the 738-foot freighter SELENDANG AYU with 26 persons aboard that had loss power in extremely adverse conditions (winds now at 45–55 knots and waves of 25 feet) offshore of Spray Cape, Unalaska in the Aleutian Chain.

Link:

<https://www.facebook.com/sean.m.cross.3/posts/pfbid0zNbgS42TupDJ3Ln9ouUitmfmY9nVsVEp1EYpzkZTPYoQhRRdruf3K2hQHfC8NeA4l>

ALPAT SAR Milestone 9

TODAY IN COAST GUARD AVIATION HISTORY – 09 FEBRUARY 2007: an HH-65B #6525 assigned to the Alaska Patrol (ALPAT) division at Air Station Kodiak, AK, but deployed to the 378-foot USCGC MELLON and crewed by LCDR Joseph Carroll (AC), LT Devin Townsend (CP), AET2 John Maghupoy (FM) and AST1 Willard Milam (RS) was moored in Dutch Harbor, Alaska, during its Bering Sea mid-patrol break, and launched at night in response to the 42-foot F/V ILLUSION foundering with four people aboard in Makushin Bay near Unalaska Island.

Link:

<https://www.facebook.com/sean.m.cross.3/posts/pfbid02xZKbWDvTgx9cQ6JWFUvwxewJwM7xcCLzrWztQGvjogwVLpnSWU6YtTJdCZS5NiWTl>

ALPAT SAR Milestone 10

TODAY IN COAST GUARD AVIATION HISTORY – 23 MARCH 2008: an HH-60J #6007 assigned to Air Station Kodiak, AK, but deployed to St. Paul Island and an MH-65C #6566 assigned to the Alaska Patrol (ALPAT) division at Air Station Kodiak, but deployed aboard USCGC MUNRO – a 378-foot high endurance cutter – responded to a 3:00 am broadcasted distress call from fishing vessel ALASKA RANGER, a 192-foot factory trawler with 47 persons aboard, reporting that it had lost its rudder and was taking on water in the Bering Sea 120 miles west of Dutch Harbor, AK. The aircrews battled challenging conditions in an Easter Sunday blizzard including 20-foot waves, snow, poor visibility, 30-knot winds, low ceilings and darkness – they were:

HH-60J #6007 - LT Brian McLaughlin
LT Steve Bonn
AMT2 Robert DeBolt
AST2 O'Brien Hollow

MH-65C #6566 - LT T.J. Schmitz
LT Greg Gedemer
AMT2 Al Musgrave
AST2 Abram Heller

The unexpected ship flooding meant the crew had to abandon ship at night, into the frigid Bering Sea. Radio pleas for help were forwarded to MUNRO, which moved toward the area while dispatching helicopters. By the end of the effort, 42 of the 47-person crew had been located and brought safely to shore, most suffering severe hypothermia.

Link:

<https://www.facebook.com/sean.m.cross.3/posts/pfbid02FGQnvtP4zXGjmHEWUovntJurbhXjG5ahVYSGH9TwXwGneYf6eF2WeTiiMyJ3MwEI>

ALPAT SAR Milestone 11

TODAY IN COAST GUARD AVIATION HISTORY (VIDEO) – 06 MAY 2018 (1 OF 2): an MH-65D #6593 assigned to the Alaska Patrol (ALPAT) division at Air Station Kodiak, AK, but deployed aboard USCGC JOHN MIDGETTE – a 378-foot high endurance cutter – and crewed by LCDR Dan Schrader (AC), LCDR Adam Mullins, AMT2 Jentzen Green, AET1 Gregory Mayes and AET2 Jacqueline Gutierrez launched to MEDEVAC a critically ill crewmember from the USNS SBX-1, a floating, self-propelled, mobile active electronically scanned array early-warning radar station designed to operate in high winds and heavy seas, located approximately 400 miles south of Adak, AK.

Link:

<https://www.facebook.com/sean.m.cross.3/posts/pfbid0g2ZqLE1Axrq9GK1RUAcUKFUa7r6DotsMKqWunCf3qut1qCwbmCevY3GWYay4WDdul>

THE ALPAT BROTHERHOOD

FROM DUTCH TO ATTU, THE ALEUTIANS ARE PATROLLED,
THE BERING SEA TRANSITTED, AGAIN AND AGAIN,
BY MEN AND MACHINE, FIGHTING WIND AND COLD
THEY WORK AS ONE, THOUGH DIFFERENT THEY SEEM.
SOME COME WILLINGLY, OTHERS WITH UNCERTAINTY,
BUT, ALL ARE GLAD TO HAVE JOINED THE TEAM.
DEPLOYMENTS TO THE NORTH, SOUTH, EAST AND WEST,
THEY KNOW NOT WHAT TO EXPECT, BUT FIND IN THE END,
THAT ALL HAVE PERFORMED THEIR UTMOST BEST.
THESE ARE BROTHERS OF A SORT.
WORK HARD, PLAY HARD AND
LIVE LIFE AS THOUGH IT WERE SHORT.
THOUGH OTHERS HAVE BEEN, AND MORE WILL BE,
THEIR STORIES SHALL ALWAYS REMAIN.
TALES OF CREW AND PLANE, OF SHIP AND SEA,
AND DARING DEEDS, OTHERS THINK INSANE.
MOST EAGERLY LEAVE, BUT LIFELONG, ALL REMEMBER,
PLANES AND MEN TESTED TO THEIR EXTREME,
AND THE BONDS SHARED AS AN ALPAT TEAM MEMBER.

KMR



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