

Storis Saga is Personal to Many

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Jay Barrett/KMXT

This week we've been bringing you new developments in the story of the former U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Storis, which is currently in Mexico, awaiting its fate. The one-time longest serving cutter in the Coast Guard will be cut apart and its parts melted down as scrap metal, unless there is a way to stop the process and bring the 71-year-old ship back to America.

Supporters, including maritime historian Jon Ottman thinks there could be some hope to believe the ship will come home. He has gotten Mexican environmental authorities to examine the Storis to see if it contains toxic materials that would be exposed if the ship is cut apart.

"I sent them documentation regarding the Storis, including the report used by the various government agencies involved, the Coast Guard, the GSA, the Maritime Administration and the EPA that were used to clear the ship for export. This includes the report created in November 2000 that sampled 39 locations onboard Storis for PCBs, and explaining to them not one of the sites in this report had anything to do with electrical wiring or components."

Ottman says he shared two letters with the Mexican authorities from former crewmen, who served aboard the Storis in its final years. Both stated they believed hazardous material remained onboard, despite reports to the contrary.

"One letter is from the electrician's mate familiar with the ship's electrical system. He has indicated that there was a large quantity of old wiring that was still onboard the ship. "While it had been bypassed with newer wiring, the old wiring had been left in place as to remove it would have disturbed asbestos in which it was encapsulated." The other letter from the Storis' last chief boatswain's mate. He had reviewed the 2000 report that was used to clear the ship, and he went through and refuted on a line-by-line review the areas chosen for PCB testing, stating that it was obvious to him that "there was a conscious effort to avoid any location where PCBs above regulated limits would be found."

Those crewmen Ottman quoted were electrician's mate Yoshua Eli and chief boatswain's mate Greg Papineau, now retired to Wasilla.

Quite a large community of former crewmen, preservationists, supporters of the Storis Museum, and others has followed the roller-coaster ride of the ship's fate since its 2007 decommissioning, and Ottman says it's become very personal for many.

"This has been a very, very emotional situation for all of involved. We have been reaching out to anybody and everybody that we think can help. This is a travesty that this ship, that was designated as a nationally significant historic vessels, was treated basically no better than an old file cabinet or beat up old cop car by the federal government and was allowed to be disposed of in this fashion."

In

another development we first reported yesterday, Senator Mark Begich has directed his staff to look into whether U.S. agencies followed their own rules in auctioning off the Storis for just \$70,000.