

Coast Guard Crews Honored

Thursday, 15 May 2008

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Rear Admiral Gene Brooks, commander of Coast Guard operations in Alaska, addresses the crew of the Coast Guard cutter Munro Thursday. The entire crew of the Munro was honored with the Unit Commendation award for their participation in the rescue of the crew of the Alaska Ranger, which sank Easter morning in the Bering Sea. The aviation crews from two Coast Guard helicopters that took part in the rescue were also honored. (Photo by Casey Kelly/KMXT).

The Coast Guard today (Thursday) honored the crews involved in the rescue of 42 fishermen and processing workers from the factory trawler Alaska Ranger, which sank Easter morning in the Bering Sea. KMXT's Casey Kelly has more.

The crew of the cutter Munro was honored at an early morning ceremony aboard the ship docked at the Kodiak Coast Guard base. The crew received the Unit Commendation award for their efforts in saving 20 people when the Alaska Ranger went down March 23.

Rear Admiral Gene Brooks, commander of Coast Guard operations in Alaska, said in a speech that the rescue was something the crew of the Munro should never forget.

(CG Award 1 :17s "to be a day of days.")

Forty-seven people were aboard the Alaska Ranger when she went down. Besides the 20 that were rescued by the Munro, the Ranger's sister ship, Alaska Warrior, saved 22. Five people died, including the captain. Brooks said there was a lesson to learn from those deaths. But he said that shouldn't diminish what the rescuers accomplished.

(CG Award 2 :27s "to respond for this case.")

Munro Captain Craig Lloyd said after the ceremony that it was an honor for he and his crew, not just for the work they put into the rescue, but for the work they put in year-round.

(CG
Award 3 :12s "we're
away from our families.")

In
a separate afternoon ceremony at a hangar on base, the crews of two Coast Guard
helicopters involved in the rescue received Air Medals. Brooks said it was fortunate
that the Coast Guard had the air units deployed to the Bering Sea at the time
that the Ranger sank.

(CG
Award 4 :39s "these things aligned for success.")

Lieutenant Brian
McLaughlin piloted the MH-60 Jayhawk during the rescue. He says it was one of
the most difficult missions he's ever flown.

(CG Award 5 :19s "still a fairly positive outcome.")

The Alaska Ranger
sinking is still under investigation by the Coast Guard and the National
Transportation Safety Board. Hearings so far have revealed that something
catastrophic must have happened to the back of the ship that caused it to sink
so quickly, but what that was is still unknown.

Casey Kelly.

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