

Rogerson retires from Coast Guard, hands reins to unit's first female leader

New London - The day after this year's 98th anniversary of the sinking of the RMS Titanic, a cargo ship en route from Germany to Canada struck an iceberg.

The Federal Kushiro ignored published warnings about icebergs and sea ice and took a shortcut through the Strait of Belle Isle, north of Newfoundland, on April 16, said Cmdr. Scott Rogerson. No one was injured, but the iceberg took a large chunk out of the ship's bow.

Rogerson told that story Tuesday at Fort Trumbull to highlight the importance of the U.S. Coast Guard International Ice Patrol's mission of monitoring iceberg danger near the Grand Banks of Newfoundland and warning mariners of the risk of iceberg collision.

Rogerson then turned over command of the unit to Cmdr. Lisa Mack and retired from the service. "It was a terrific three years," he said. "We accomplished a lot. Most importantly, we maintained our record of protecting mariners from icebergs."

The IIP was formed after the Titanic struck an iceberg and sank in the North Atlantic on April 15, 1912. There has not been a reported loss of life or property from striking an iceberg from ships that have heeded IIP warnings and steered clear of the area with icebergs.

Mack, who is the first female commanding officer of the unit, previously served as chief of the mobility and ice operations branch at Coast Guard Headquarters in Washington, D.C. She has served on icebreakers and at the IIP from 1999 to 2003.

Mack foresees challenges, including the fact that members of the unit are going

to the Gulf of Mexico to help with the oil spill cleanup. This means there will be fewer people in New London to train for the iceberg season.

The IIP will also have to continue to evaluate how modern technology, notably satellites, can be used to find icebergs in the future, Mack said. "Everyone has impressed on me the awesome responsibility you take on as the commanding officer of the Ice Patrol," she said after the ceremony. "It's a little daunting, but also encouraging."

Rogerson led the IIP during a period of change and busy iceberg seasons. The unit moved from Groton to New London and started patrolling near the Grand Banks in newer aircraft with improved radar.

He also worked to strengthen the partnerships the IIP has with other agencies, including the Canadian Ice Service and the Maryland-based National Ice Center. The three agencies combined to form the North American Ice Service.

Many of those partners attended the ceremony, including Navy Capt. Ray Chartier Jr., former director of the National Ice Center, and Canadian Navy Cmdr. Douglas Bancroft, former director of the Canadian Ice Service. Rogerson, Chartier and Bancroft served together as co-directors of the North American Ice Service. Known as the "three amigos," they called one another frequently to discuss common issues.

"It's lonely at the top and you need someone you can talk to," Chartier said.

Rogerson spent 21 years in the Coast Guard, which included teaching at the Coast Guard Academy, commanding two cutters and serving two tours with the IIP. He was awarded the meritorious service medal for his command of the unit.

"I commend you for a job and a career extremely well done," said guest speaker Capt. Joseph A. Servidio, chief of staff for the First Coast Guard District

in Boston.

Rogerson is now headed to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to be the program manager for a satellite data collection system.