

Coast Guard Offloads \$48M in Cocaine, 6 Suspected Smugglers in Puerto Rico



The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Heriberto Hernandez (WPC-1114) offloaded 62 bales of cocaine weighing 1,981 kilograms and one 28-kilogram bale of amphetamines at Sector San Juan Oct. 2, 2020, following two separate interdictions of smuggling go-fast vessels in the Caribbean Sea. U.S. Coast Guard / Ricardo Castrodad

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Heriberto Hernandez (WPC-1114) offloaded approximately 1,981 kilograms of cocaine, 28 kilograms of amphetamines and six suspected smugglers at Sector San Juan Oct. 2, following two separate interdictions in the Caribbean Sea, the Coast Guard 7th District said in an Oct. 3 release.

The seized illegal narcotics have a wholesale value of more than \$48 million.

The interdictions are the result of multi-agency and international partnership efforts in support of U.S. Southern Command's enhanced counter-narcotics operations in the Western Hemisphere, the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) program and the Caribbean Corridor Strike Force (CCSF). The United States Attorney's Office for the District of Puerto Rico is leading the prosecution for the two cases.

"The Coast Guard is uniquely equipped to support the U.S. Navy and partner nation navies and coast guards in the interdiction of illicit drugs," said Rear Adm. Eric C. Jones, Seventh Coast Guard District commander. "Our relationships with nations across the Caribbean basin, along with our law enforcement authorities, enable us to provide essential support to the mission against international criminal networks attempting to

smuggle people and drugs into the U.S. We strive to continue building these relationships, further enabling our essential missions that safeguard the American people and our nation's vital maritime commerce."

"We continue to work with federal and state law enforcement agencies, along with our partners from the Royal Netherlands and United Kingdom navies, against drug traffickers in our area," said W. Stephen Muldrow, U.S. Attorney for the District of Puerto Rico. "These seizures mark two more successful operations in our fight against criminal organizations attempting to use our territories as a hub for their illegal operations."

The most recent interdiction occurred Monday, Sept. 28. During a routine patrol of the RFA Argus, a Royal Fleet Auxiliary ship from the United Kingdom, the ship's helicopter crew observed a suspect go-fast vessel with multiple packages and barrels of fuel onboard. The HNLMS Groningen, a Holland-class offshore patrol vessel from the Royal Netherlands Navy that was operating nearby with a Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment onboard, responded and interdicted the go-fast with the assistance of the ship's surface asset.

The crew of the HNLMS Groningen embarked three smugglers; a Colombian, a Venezuelan and a Dominican Republic national from the go-fast. They also located and recovered aboard the go-fast 49 bales that weighed 1,721 kilograms and tested positive for cocaine, and one package that weighed 28 kilograms and tested positive for amphetamines.

The second interdiction occurred Sept. 24, after the aircrew of a U.S. Customs and Border Protection maritime patrol aircraft detected a suspicious 35-foot go-fast vessel transiting without the use of navigational lights. Coast Guard watchstanders in Sector San Juan directed the launch of a Coast Guard Air Station Miami HC-144 Ocean Sentry aircraft that relieved the first aircraft and maintained aerial

coverage of the go-fast.

The cutter Heriberto Hernandez responded to the sighting and interdicted the go-fast with the assistance of the cutter's small boat and the Coast Guard aircrew. The Coast Guard boarding team embarked the three men, who claimed to be Dominican Republic nationals, along with 13 bales of suspected contraband that were located under a blue tarp aboard the go-fast. The seized contraband tested positive for cocaine and weighed 260 kilograms.

The cutter Heriberto Hernandez transported the seized contraband and suspected smugglers from both cases to Sector San Juan, where awaiting federal law enforcement agencies received custody.

Cutter Heriberto Hernandez is a 154-foot fast response cutter homeported in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

DHS S&T, USCG Partner to Develop High-Tech, Ruggedized Tracking Buoy



Kenautics' Diver Navigation and Imaging System will be repackaged into a ruggedized buoy. Kenautics

WASHINGTON – The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) [Science and Technology Directorate's](#) (S&T) [Silicon Valley Innovation Program](#) (SVIP) has awarded \$157,801 in Phase 1 funding to Kenautics, Inc., of Encinitas, California, to provide a more reliable system for marking objects in water, under SVIP's [Maritime Object Tracking Technology](#) (MOTT)

solicitation, the department said in an October release.

The MOTT solicitation supports U.S. [Coast Guard](#) (USCG) missions by seeking more reliable tracking systems for accurately marking and monitoring objects in the water for recovery. The solution is intended to be used during operational missions to bolster waterway security, drug interdiction, search and rescue, and disaster response.

Kenautics proposes to adapt their handheld Diver Navigation and Imaging System – meant for waypoint navigation; subsea imaging; situational awareness; and information, surveillance, and reconnaissance – by repackaging the system into a ruggedized buoy deployable from land, air, and sea under adverse conditions. The Kenautics GPS-AIS Navigation and Tracking Buoy will be usable in both overt and covert operations and will be designed to provide tracking and position data, geo-referenced forensic data sets, localization capabilities, and interactive functions.

“Working together with DHS S&T and SVIP allows the Coast Guard to pursue innovative solutions through start-ups and small companies that are developing advanced technology, and we are looking forward to Kenautics’ Phase 1 effort,” said Wendy Chaves, chief of Coast Guard Research, Development, Test and Evaluation, and Innovation.

“This marks the first award made under our partnership with USCG,” said Melissa Oh, SVIP Managing Director. “With experience designing for Navy Explosive Ordnance Disposal, special operators, and first responders, we are optimistic that this project with Kenautics will enhance the USCG’s ability to carry out their missions.”

The MOTT solicitation is open through 12:00 p.m. PST on February 20, 2021. Applications will be accepted on a continuous, rolling basis, and SVIP will evaluate applications three times on a quarterly basis. The next application

deadlines are Oct. 20, 2020, and Feb. 20, 2021.

USS Hershel 'Woody' Williams Shifts Homeport to Greece



The Expeditionary Sea Base USS Hershel "Woody" Williams (ESB 4) arrives at the Marathi NATO Pier Facility in Souda Bay, Greece, August 18, 2020. U.S. Navy / Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Kelly M. Agee

NAVAL SUPPORT ACTIVITY SOUDA BAY, Greece – The Expeditionary Sea Base USS Hershel "Woody" Williams (ESB 4), shifted its homeport from Norfolk, Va., to Souda Bay, Greece, effective Oct. 1, 2020, the U.S. Sixth Fleet Public Affairs said in an Oct. 2 release.

Hershel 'Woody' Williams conducts U.S. Africa Command missions in the Mediterranean, and the waters around East, South and West Africa, to include the Gulf of Guinea operating with regional partners.

"Hershel 'Woody' Williams provides a new capability in the theater, which enhances our interoperability with our partners across the spectrum of maritime operations," said Vice Adm. Gene Black, commander, U.S. Sixth Fleet. "The unique design of the ship fosters inter-service operations with our U.S. Marine Corps and Special Operations communities, which improves our ability to ensure maritime security and stability."

Due to the ship's extended overseas assignment, Military Sealift Command (MSC) will conduct her routine maintenance in existing facilities at NSA Souda Bay and other overseas ports.

“The ship truly demonstrates the U.S. Navy’s incomparable maritime flexibility and professionalism,” said Capt. David Gray, Hershel “Woody” Williams’ commanding officer, blue crew. “We operate with a crew of Sailors and civilians who, since our arrival in Sixth Fleet have supported U.S. Marine Corps and Special Operations training, as well as partner nation missions from the Eastern Mediterranean to the Gulf of Guinea.”

The ship’s two-fold mission provides the U.S. a forward deployed naval presence in Africa, as well as increased naval power through Navy and Marine Corps integrated operations, including Marine aviation and support to amphibious operations. Other operations and training capabilities the ship performs include support to special operations, command and control, and staging of equipment.

NSA Souda Bay serves as a naval logistics hub for U.S. 6th Fleet, providing support to U.S. warships and logistics ships in the region.

U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa and U.S. 6th Fleet, headquartered in Naples, Italy, conduct the full spectrum of joint and naval operations, often in concert with allied and interagency partners, in order to advance U.S. national interests and security and stability in Europe and Africa.

VideoRay begins shipping Defender ROVs to U.S. Navy



A VideoRay Defender in action during an underwater deployment. Naval Information Warfare Center Pacific

POTTSTOWN, Pa. – Remotely operated vehicle (ROV) maker VideoRay has begun shipping its new Defender underwater robot to the U.S. Navy, the company said Oct. 1.

The shipments are done under an existing \$49 million contract to deliver the Navy's Next Generation ROV. The systems are being delivered with integrated sensors, tooling and software from Greensea, Blueprint Subsea, Nortek and Eddyfi, the company said.

The systems are being assembled at VideoRay's Pottstown, Pennsylvania facility and will be used by the Navy for operations including littoral mine countermeasures, port security missions, and hull and pier inspection. Defender ROV shipments will be completed under the contract by the end of the year.

Coast Guard Cutter Northland Returns Home from Patrol



The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Northland conducts a live firing of the MK 75 76mm weapons system while underway, September 20, 2020, in the Atlantic Ocean. The cutter returned to its homeport of Portsmouth, Virginia, Wednesday after a 47-day patrol . U.S. Coast Guard / Seaman Vincent Bologno

PORTSMOUTH, Va. – The Coast Guard Cutter Northland (WMEC-904) returned to its homeport in Portsmouth after a 47-day patrol conducting counter-drug and migrant interdiction operations in the Caribbean Sea and Atlantic Ocean, Sept. 30, the Coast Guard 5th District said in an Oct. 1 release.

The Northland deployed in August and offered pre-storm

information and assistance to locals off the coast of Haiti.

Prior to the arrival of Tropical Storm Laura off the island of Hispaniola, Northland crewmembers located a disoriented fisherman who had drifted approximately 17 miles offshore. The crew provided him with food and water as the ship escorted him back to land well ahead of the storm's passage.

The Northland also hosted a civilian Haitian-Creole interpreter for the majority of the patrol to assist with translations.

"Before this mission I did not know anything about the Coast Guard," said Rishi Jolivian, a Haitian-Creole interpreter aboard the Northland. "But, now I have so much gratitude and appreciation for what the Coast Guard does. I have tremendous respect for the Northland and it's truly an awesome place to be."

The Northland crewmembers provided Coast Guard presence along the north coast of Haiti by conducting 20 transits through the Canal de Tortue. The crew also maintained a robust training schedule earning more than 160 qualifications in addition to running over 60 shipboard drills and over 30 hours of small boat training. A highlight for the crew was the live-fire gunnery exercise of the 76mm Mk75 Gun Weapon System.

"I am truly humbled to command a crew that diligently works to get the job done," stated Cmdr. Patricia Bennett, commanding officer of the Northland. "Their remarkable ability to overcome the inherent challenges of serving aboard an aging 36-year old asset downrange during a global pandemic cannot be overstated. The crew maintained a high level of morale and camaraderie that, in my opinion, is really only encountered by those of us who serve aboard Coast Guard cutters. This crew truly demonstrates the spirit of why I go to sea."

Upon the Northland's return to homeport, the crew will conduct critical maintenance and repairs to extend the ship's

service life and will undergo a rigorous training assessment to ensure emergency readiness for future deployments.

The Northland is a 270-foot medium-endurance cutter homeported in Portsmouth, Virginia and routinely deploys in support of counter-drug, migrant interdiction, fisheries, and search and rescue and homeland security missions.

U.S. Coast Guard Conducts Joint Arctic Operations, Scientific Research Off Greenland



USCGC CAMPBELL ventured into Disko Bay with the HDMS Knud Rasmussen for joint helicopter training exercises. Disko Bay is known for its heavy concentration of large icebergs calving off the Jacobshavn Glacier. U.S. COAST GUARD ATLANTIC DIVISION KITTERY, Maine – U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Campbell (WMEC 909) returned to homeport Tuesday, following a two-month deployment supporting joint Arctic operations off Greenland’s western coast, the Coast Guard Atlantic Area said in a Sept. 29 release.

Campbell’s crew contributed to joint exercises, research and development efforts, and critical diplomatic engagements while covering more than 11,500 miles (10,000 nautical miles).

“I am very proud of the efforts and adaptability of every one of Campbell’s crew who demonstrated the ability to operate and execute our mission aboard one of the finest Famous-class

cutters in the fleet, said Capt. Thomas Crane, commanding officer of Campbell. "Their dedication to duty and commitment to the Coast Guard helps to affirm the United States as an Arctic nation. It is also a credit to the name Campbell and our five predecessors. In addition to notable narcotics seizures and being the command ship for the 1996 TWA 800 recovery, we are now the first 270-foot medium-endurance cutter to earn the Arctic Service Medal."

Campbell sailed with additional support, including an embarked MH-65 Dolphin helicopter and aviation detachment consisting of two pilots and four aircrew, including a rescue swimmer. In all, eight shipriders augmented the 100-person crew during the patrol, assisting in operations, providing health services, and documenting the journey.

"I am humbled by the opportunity to be a part of this historic mission and am glad our crew's experiences will be shared with family, friends and future generations," Crane said. "Going to sea is challenging and requires personal sacrifices both from our crew and loved ones left onshore. Still, the camaraderie, teamwork and pride of our crew are the reasons I go to sea. Campbell is a great ship with a great crew able to execute missions of strategic national significance amid a global pandemic."

In early August, Campbell departed Kittery for Nuuk, Greenland, to participate in joint search-and-rescue exercise operations with French and Royal Danish naval assets.

"This effort strengthens international partnerships and provides a foundation for standard operations in the rapidly developing Arctic maritime environment," said Vice Adm. Steven Poulin, commander U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area. "As interest and maritime traffic in the area increases, the importance of the U.S. Coast Guard's interoperability with allied partners becomes more critical to ensuring we protect national and

shared security interests. Exercising our unique blend of polar operational capability, regulatory authority and international leadership across the full spectrum of maritime governance is vital to the future of the Arctic.”

The Kingdom of Denmark defense force’s Joint Arctic Command Search and Rescue Exercise ARGUS included 13 simulated coastal and open-ocean scenarios, evaluating processes and interoperability through communications testing, vessel towing evolutions, rescue boat training, and helicopter sea and land operations.

Campbell’s crew employed its embarked Dolphin crew extensively, conducting joint evolutions and professional maritime exchanges with the Royal Danish navy vessels HDMS Knud Rasmussen and HDMS Triton. They also applied NATO procedures to test interoperability with regard to ship-controlled approaches, launch, recovery and hoisting. The crews conducted joint U.S.-Danish surface and air operations in Eternity Fjord and Disko Bay, Greenland, the most active iceberg-producing area globally.

Professional exchanges with HDMS Knud Rasmussen provide an opportunity to gain valuable navigation knowledge along Greenland’s coastline and fjord system. Campbell patrolled the Labrador Sea waters, Davis Strait and the Baffin Bay, navigating Greenland’s largely uncharted western coast, including ice-laden bays and fjords, often using rudimentary sounding data as electronic charts are unavailable for the area. Throughout the patrol, Campbell safely completed over 200 helicopter evolutions, including 16 joint evolutions with the Danish navy.

In support of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, International Ice Patrol, and Coast Guard Research and Development Center, Campbell’s crew conducted testing of specialized equipment and resources in the Arctic

environment. They deployed oceanographic research buoys across Baffin Bay, the Labrador Sea and the North Atlantic to measure ocean currents and wave heights that influence iceberg drift and deterioration.

“This valuable data can provide a better understanding of the lifecycle of icebergs that impact transatlantic shipping lanes,” said Mike Hicks, of the International Ice Patrol.

IIP also analyzed 317 synthetic-aperture radar and multispectral images from satellites to monitor iceberg danger during Campbell’s operations. This effort, led by IIP’s Lt. Don Rudnickas, denotes the first time in history, novel, scalable and tailored iceberg warning products were produced with only satellite observations, depicting iceberg danger at higher granularity using oceanographic models to provide forecasted iceberg positions.

“This input significantly shapes the future of iceberg warning products in the North Atlantic and expands the capability of IIP to provide direct, tailorable support to vessels operating independently: an ability beyond the IIP’s statutory mission, but one that is likely to become highly desired with increasing Arctic operations,” said Hicks.

Mr. Matthew Lees was the RDC Demonstrations Liaison and coordinated technology evaluations for the patrol. These included an Iridium Certus Terminal, which helped provide internet access for the crew to maintain communications with Atlantic Area; two different enhanced night vision goggle devices improved law enforcement and flight operations, even integrated into ship’s display screens; a long-range acoustic device was evaluated for enhanced communications with vessels at longer distances; and a handheld Glare Helios Green Laser tested for similar stand-off hailing capabilities.

The crew also learned essential lessons using

a FiFish remotely operated vehicle in cold weather to conduct underwater inspections.

“As cruise ship and commercial vessel traffic increases through the Northwest Passage, Campbell’s recent patrol highlights our commitment to ensuring the safety and security of U.S. citizens,” said Rear Adm. Thomas Allan, commander Coast Guard 1st District. “This was also a fantastic demonstration of how we work with our partners as we seek to respect sovereignty, maximize the use of our assets, and promote environmental stewardship.”

They facilitated multiple key diplomatic engagement opportunities throughout their Arctic deployment. Campbell’s crew welcomed aboard Danish Maj. Gen. Kim Joergensen, commander of Joint Arctic Command, and Sung Choi, U.S. consul in Nuuk. Campbell’s diplomatic work was underscored by the opportunity to host Greenland’s Premier, Kim Kielsen, signifying the importance of international cooperation for the region, according to the release.

“Campbell’s efforts continue the United States’ strong relationship with Greenland, furthering a positive foundation for how the Coast Guard will interact and operate in the region,” said Poulin. “As an Arctic nation, cooperation and understanding of the dynamic and ever-changing Arctic operating environment is vital. The U.S. Coast Guard is the primary polar and Arctic surface operator of the U.S. military. The Coast Guard is committed to working collaboratively with like-minded partners through exercises like ARGUS strengthening global maritime security, regional stability, and economic prosperity.”

USS Donald Cook Completes Availability Ahead of Schedule



Sailors assigned to the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Donald Cook (DDG 75), heave around on a mooring line, Sept. 28, 2020. U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Will Hardy

ROTA, Spain – The Forward-Deployed Regional Maintenance Center (FDRMC) detachment Rota recently completed a surface incremental availability (SIA) for USS Donald Cook (DDG 75) five days ahead of schedule, returning the ship for continued operational tasking, the Navy's Team Ships Public Affairs said in a Sep. 30 release.

The USS Donald Cook is one of the Navy's four forward-deployed Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers homeported in Rota, Spain. These ships serve a vital role by supporting NATO's regional security and ballistic missile defense efforts through regular patrols and exercises in the U.S. 6th Fleet Area of Responsibility.

"With the early delivery of USS Donald Cook, the Rota team has successfully completed all four of its FY20 availabilities on time," said Capt. Gustavo Vergara commanding officer for FDRMC. "FDRMC is committed to returning ships on time in order to provide the fleet with the stability and operational readiness needed to achieve their mission."

An SIA is part of the planned maintenance cycle that keeps Navy ships ready and responsive by allowing numerous depot and intermediate level work items to be completed. The government and industry team completed the SIA in 55 days with the average time to complete being 60 days. FDRMC Rota managed to streamline and improve their typical SIA plan of execution to

deliver the ship ahead of schedule.

“Finishing the availability ahead of schedule is a testament to the maintenance strategy FDRMC Rota is executing to maintain alignment with the requirements of the operational commander,” said Cmdr. Luis Socias, officer in charge with FDRMC det Rota.

FDRMC provides contract management oversight, fleet technical assistance, voyage repair and diving and salvage to Forward Deployed Naval Forces in Europe and the Middle East and for Deployed ships in the 5th and 6th Fleet areas of responsibility.

Ex-USS Ticonderoga to be Recycled in Texas



An aerial port bow view of the Aegis guided missile cruiser USS Ticonderoga (CG-47) underway during Standard II missile tests near the Atlantic Fleet Weapons Training Facility, Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico, on April 9, 1983. U.S. NAVY
BROWNSVILLE, Texas – A contract to recycle an out-of-service U.S. Navy guided-missile cruiser has been awarded to International Shipbreaking Limited LLC., one of the world’s largest green ship recycling companies, MarineLink reported on Sept. 29.

The USS Ticonderoga (CG 47), decommissioned in 2004, concluded its final voyage last week to the Port of Brownsville, Texas, where full dismantling will commence with 98% of all removed materials being recycled. The recycling work, which requires complete demilitarization of the entire ship, is scheduled to

be completed in 2021.

Ticonderoga was built at Ingalls Shipbuilding, in Pascagoula, Mississippi, and delivered to the Navy on Dec. 13, 1982. The warship was the lead vessel of the Ticonderoga class of guided-missile cruisers and was the fifth ship in U.S. Navy history to bear the name.

The ship provided naval gunfire support off the coast of Lebanon on its maiden voyage in 1984. In 1986, it served as the lead ship crossing the "Line of Death" off the coast of Libya and removed surface-to-air missile batteries that had launched a SA-5 missile against an F-14 from USS America (CV 66). It was assigned to the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN 69) Battle Group and participated in: Operation Desert Shield in 1990, Operation Southern Watch (the enforcement of the no-fly zone over Iraq) and Operation Deny Flight, (the U.N.-mandated no-fly zone over Bosnia) in 1995. From 2001 to 2004, Ticonderoga participated in security and counter-narcotics operations out of homeport Pascagoula. Following the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, she got underway the next day at 8 a.m. to support Operation Noble Eagle (protecting airspace along the Gulf Coast).

"We take great pride in having been awarded the Defense Logistics Agency contract to recycle this historic vessel," said Chris Green, senior manager at International Shipbreaking Ltd. "The USS Ticonderoga has significant sentimental meaning to the men and women who served our country and spent a part of their lives with her. She will be recycled in a safe, respectful and environmentally responsible manner."

International Shipbreaking Ltd., part of EMR Metal Recycling, has three specialist facilities located in Brownsville, Texas; New Orleans and Amelia, Louisiana. These specialized facilities have recycled more than 400 ships and marine structures including USS Tripoli (LPH 10), USS Constellation (CV 64), USS Ranger (CV 61) and USS Independence (CV 62). The

USS Cape Florida (AK 5071) currently is being recycled.

Coast Guard Interdicts 9 Cuban Migrants



A Coast Guard Cutter William Trump (WPC-1111) smallboat crew and a Coast Guard Station Marathon 33-foot Special Purpose Craft-Law Enforcement crew interdict a rustic vessel 10 miles south of Key Colony Beach, Florida, Sept. 27, 2020. U.S. COAST GUARD

KEY WEST, Fla. – The Coast Guard interdicted nine Cuban migrants approximately 10 miles south of Key Colony Beach, Florida, Sept. 27, the Coast Guard 7th District said in a Sept. 29 release.

Coast Guard Sector Key West watchstanders received a report of a migrant vessel with nine people aboard south of Key Colony Beach. Watchstanders launched a Coast Guard Station Marathon 33-foot Special Purpose Craft-Law Enforcement crew and launched Coast Guard Cutter William Trump (WPC-1111) crew.

Both crews arrived on scene and the cutter William Trump crew safely embarked the 9 male Cuban migrants. The Coast Guard Cutter Kathleen Moore (WPC-110) crew repatriated the nine Cuban migrants to Cabanas, Cuba.

The Coast Guard interdicted approximately 40 Cuban migrants who have attempted to illegally enter the U.S via the maritime environment in fiscal year 2020, which began Oct. 1, 2019, compared to 327 Cuban migrants in fiscal year 2019. These numbers represent the total number of at-sea interdictions, landings and disruptions in the Florida Straits, the Caribbean

and Atlantic Ocean.

Once aboard a Coast Guard cutter, all migrants receive food, water, shelter and basic medical attention. Throughout the interdiction Coast Guard crewmembers were equipped with personal protective equipment to minimize potential exposure to any possible case of COVID-19.

“The crew and I are extremely pleased with the outcome of the recent joint interdiction with our shipmates from Station Marathon,” said Lt. Kyle Pearson, command officer of the cutter William Trump. “Sector Key West’s readiness posture and increased Maritime Domain Awareness allowed for a prompt and safe interdiction, preserving both the safety of life at sea and the integrity of our maritime borders.”

Coast Guard Repatriates 20 Migrants to the Dominican Republic



The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Heriberto Hernandez (WPC-1114) cutter boat helps transfer 20 migrants, who claimed to be Dominican Republic nationals, to the Coast Guard Cutter Vigilant (WMEC-617) during a rendezvous in the Mona Passage Sept. 27, 2020. U.S. COAST GUARD

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – The Coast Guard Cutter Vigilant (WMEC-617) repatriated 20 migrants to the Dominican Republic between Sept. 27 and Sept. 29, following the interdiction of an illegal migrant voyage in the Mona Passage just off Rincon, Puerto Rico, the Coast Guard 7th District said in a Sept. 29 release.

The interdiction is the result of ongoing multiagency efforts in support of Operation Caribbean Guard and the Caribbean Border Interagency Group CBIG.

“The crew of the Heriberto Hernandez is glad to help save all 20 lives from this grossly overloaded makeshift vessel,” said Lt. Andrew Russo, Coast Guard Cutter Heriberto Hernandez (WPC-1114) commanding officer. “Unfortunately like in most cases, the conditions these migrants faced placed their lives in great danger. These makeshift vessels are unstable; they are unseaworthy and continuously take on water. Throughout the voyage, the migrants are exposed to the elements and leaking fuel, and they rarely have any serviceable lifesaving equipment onboard.”

Coast Guard watchstanders at Sector San Juan received a communication late Saturday night from a Ramey Border Patrol Sector agent, who informed a Puerto Rico Police Joint Forces of Rapid Action marine unit was on scene with an illegal voyage, approximately five nautical miles southwest of Rincon, Puerto Rico. Coast Guard watchstanders diverted the Coast Guard Cutter Heriberto Hernandez to the scene.

Once on scene with the interdicted 20-foot makeshift boat, the crew of cutter Heriberto Hernandez safely embarked the migrants for safety of life at sea concerns. The migrant vessel was transporting 16 adult men and two women, as well as two male unaccompanied minors, who claimed to be Dominican Republic nationals.

Once aboard a Coast Guard cutter, all migrants received food, water, shelter and basic medical attention. Throughout the interdiction, Coast Guard crewmembers were equipped with personal protective equipment to minimize potential exposure to any possible case of COVID-19. There were no migrants in these cases reported to have any COVID-19 related symptoms.

Cutter Heriberto Hernandez later transferred the migrants to

the cutter Vigilant, which in turn completed the repatriation of the migrants. Eighteen of the migrants were repatriated at sea, where they were transferred to a Dominican Republic navy vessel Sunday, while the remaining two were repatriated and transferred to local authorities in Santo Domingo Tuesday morning.

Cutters Heriberto Hernandez is a 154-foot fast-response cutter homeported in San Juan, Puerto Rico, while the cutter Vigilant is a 210-foot medium-endurance cutter homeported in Port Canaveral, Florida.