Coast Guard Breaks Illegal Fishing Interdiction Record for 3rd Straight Year



A Station South Padre Island law enforcement boat crew stops a lancha crew engaged in illegal fishing in federal waters in the Gulf of Mexico on April 30. Coast Guard law enforcement crews have already interdicted a record-breaking number of lanchas throughout the Gulf of Mexico for fiscal year 2020. U.S. Coast Guard/Station South Padre Island

NEW ORLEANS – U.S. Coast Guard law enforcement crews have already interdicted a record-breaking number of lanchas throughout the Gulf of Mexico for fiscal year 2020, the Coast Guard 8th District said in a release.

Since October 2019, Coast Guard assets and personnel have detected 176 lanchas and interdicted 106. Since the first recorded lancha interdiction in the late 1980s, the Coast Guard has seen a significant uptick in detection of these vessels, particularly in the past three years, recording a seasonal record of 74 lancha interdictions during the same time frame in the previous fiscal year.

The Coast Guard utilizes a layered approach for interdiction through aircraft, small boats and cutters as well as improved technology on those assets, resulting in the drastic increase in lancha interdictions.

“A huge part of our mission success comes from the dedication and close coordination between our local, state and federal partners,” said Lt. Kurt Mees, Coast Guard Station South Padre Island commanding officer. “We are all committed to the

protection of marine resources and the enforcement of U.S. regulations.”

A lancha is a fishing boat used by Mexican fishermen that is about 20 to 30 feet long with a slender profile. They typically have one outboard motor and are capable of traveling at speeds in excess of 30 mph. Lanchas pose a major threat, usually entering the United States’ Exclusive Economic Zone near the U.S.-Mexico border in the Gulf of Mexico with the intent to smuggle people, drugs or poach U.S. natural resources.