Coast Guard, CBP, Homeland Security Partner Agencies Interdict Drug Smuggling Vessel



A Coast Guard Station San Juan boat crew and Homeland Security Task Force – San Juan Region partner agencies completed the custody transfer of three apprehended smugglers and the offload of sixteen bales of cocaine which

weighed 506kgs/1,115.54 pounds which were valued at more than $7 million. The apprehension and seizure followed the interdiction of a drug smuggling vessel in Atlantic Ocean waters north of Puerto Rico, Jan. 14, 2026. (U.S. Coast Guard photo)
From U.S. Coast Guard Southeast District, Jan. 22, 2026

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – A Coast Guard Station San Juan boat crew working with Homeland Security Task Force – San Juan Region partner agencies interdicted a drug smuggling vessel and apprehended three men in Atlantic Ocean waters north of Puerto Rico, Jan. 14, 2026.

During the interdiction, law enforcement agents seized 16 bales of cocaine weighing a combined total of 506kgs/1,115.54 pounds, which are estimated to have a wholesale value of more than $7 million.

During patrol efforts, a Coast Guard Air Station Miami HC-144 Ocean Sentry aircrew detected a suspicious 25-foot blue and white panga type go-fast vessel in international waters north of Vega Baja, Puerto Rico. Coast Guard watchstanders in Sector San Juan diverted the cutter Joseph Tezanos and a Station San Juan 45-Response Boat Medium boat crew to interdict the suspect vessel. A Customs and Border Protection Air and Marine multi-role enforcement aircraft also responded and maintained aerial surveillance of the suspect vessel. Once on-scene, the Station San Juan boat crew, with the support of the CBP aircrew and the cutter Joseph Tezanos, successfully interdicted and took positive control of the suspect vessel. Following the interdiction, the Coast Guard boat crew embarked the three smugglers and recovered sixteen bales of contraband which tested positive for cocaine from the vessel. The contraband and suspects were later transferred to HSTF law enforcement partners in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

“This successful narcotics interdiction highlights the efficient interoperability and strength within the Coast Guard, Customs and Border Protection Caribbean Air and Marine

Branch and our Homeland Security Task Force partner agencies to interdict drug smuggling vessels and secure the nation’s Eastern Caribbean maritime borders from this threat.” said Cmdr. Matthew Romano, Coast Guard Sector San Juan chief of response. “I commend the professionalism and coordination between all partners who contributed to this the interdiction. We are proud to stand the watch alongside our Department of Homeland Security, Department of Justice and our local law enforcement partners as we continue to relentlessly combat illicit trafficking throughout the waters of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.”