Coast Guard, CBP Interdicts Suspected Smuggler, 16 Migrants

Two U.S. Customs and Border Patrol surface asset crews interdict a 25-foot pleasure craft with 16 migrants and one suspected smuggler aboard on Aug. 12 about 14 miles east of Haulover Inlet, Florida. U.S. COAST GUARD

MIAMI – The U.S. Coast Guard, along with U.S. Customs and Border Protection Air and Marine Operations (CBP AMO), halted a migrant smuggling operation on Aug. 13 about 14 miles east of Haulover Inlet, Florida, the Coast Guard 7th District said in a release.

A CBP AMO aircraft crew spotted a 25-foot pleasure craft traveling about 14 miles east of Haulover Inlet and vectored two CBP surface asset crews to the scene. The CBP crews embarked the 11 Haitian males, four Haitian females, one Bahamian male, one Bahamian female and transferred them to the Coast Guard Cutter Manatee crew.

The smuggler was transferred ashore to CBP custody and the interdicted migrants were repatriated to Freeport, Bahamas.

“People should never trust these criminal organizations with their lives,” said Lt. Cmdr. Juan Carlos Avila, Coast Guard Sector Miami chief of enforcement. “Attempting to smuggle yourself into the country via the maritime environment is both extremely dangerous and illegal. With the consistent danger these smuggling ventures present, our crews and partner agencies remain persistently vigilant to protect lives and enforce federal laws.”

The Coast Guard has interdicted about 400 Haitian 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 885 Haitian 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 crew members were equipped with personal protective equipment to minimize potential exposure to any possible case of COVID-19.