Coast Guard Ends Search for Survivors of Sunken Migrant Boat

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – U.S. Coast Guard rescue crews ended a four-day search on July 25 night for survivors of a reported sunken migrant boat in the Mona Passage, the Coast Guard's 7th District said in a July 26 release.

Twelve migrants reportedly remain missing after search efforts revealed no signs of persons in the water nor of a debris field indicative of capsized or sunken vessel.

One survivor, a Dominican man who was rescued by the Coast Guard in Mona Passage waters on July 23, claimed to be traveling with 12 others aboard a migrant boat that was transiting from the Dominican Republic to Puerto Rico when their vessel sank after becoming disabled and taking on water.

"Our thoughts and prayers are with the families, friends and loved ones of those who may have been taking part in this reported migrant voyage," said Cmdr. Beau Powers, Sector San Juan chief of response.

"To anyone in the Dominican Republic thinking about taking part or who may know of someone, do not take to the sea! The lives of the people who entrust ruthless smugglers, who are looking to only make profit, are in great danger. These voyages mostly take part in grossly overloaded and unseaworthy boats, that are constantly taking on water and have little or no lifesaving equipment aboard."

Coast Guard watchstanders at Sector San Juan were contacted via a VHF Channel 16 radio transmission at about 7 p.m. on July 22 from the motor tanker Coral Energy, requesting search-and-rescue assistance in the area after the crew reported

hearing voices coming from the water, while the tanker was transiting approximately 10 miles north of Mona Island, Puerto Rico.

A Coast Guard cutter, Joseph Doyle, diverted to the area and arrived on scene with the tanker, where the rescued man was located by the crew of the Coral Energy. The crew used a spotlight to vector-in the cutter Joseph Doyle to the survivor’s position. The Joseph Doyle came alongside and safely recovered the survivor.

The survivor stated he was able to stay afloat while holding on to two gasoline containers, which caused him to receive chemical burns on his body.

Since July 23, cutter rescue crews conducted 17 air and eight surface searches covering 7,117 square nautical miles within the search area, an area twice the size of Puerto Rico.

Rescue assets participating in the search were: cutter Winslow Griesser; cutter Joseph Doyle; MH-65 Dolphin helicopters from Air Station Borinquen; MH-60 Jayhawk helicopter crew from Air Station Clearwater, Florida; an HC-144 Ocean Sentry from Air Station Miami; an HH-C-130 Hercules from Air Station Clearwater, Florida; Customs and Border Protection maritime patrol aircraft.