Coast Guard Interdicts 21 Migrants near Puerto Rico



The Coast Guard Cutter Robert Yered interdicts an illegal voyage in the Mona Passage near Puerto Rico Sept. 1, 2020. The cutter Robert Yered repatriated 20 of the 21 migrants to a Dominican Republic Navy vessel . One of the migrants remains in U.S. federal custody in Puerto Rico facing criminal immigration charges. U.S. Coast Guard

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – The Coast Guard Cutter Robert Yered (WPC-1104) repatriated 20 of 21 migrants to a Dominican Republic Navy vessel Sept. 2, following the interdiction of an illegal migrant voyage in the Mona Passage west of Puerto Rico.

The remaining migrant was turned over to U.S. Border Patrol agents to face possible criminal immigration and migrant smuggling charges in Puerto Rico. The interdiction is the result of ongoing multiagency efforts in support of Operation Caribbean Guard and the Caribbean Border Interagency Group.

“The crew of the cutter Robert Yered’s response led to a swift interdiction and safe recovery of all the migrants in this case,” said Cmdr. Beau Powers, Sector San Juan chief of response. “The danger migrants face during this and mostly all attempted illegal voyages is quite real, especially when they trust their safety to ruthless smugglers who embark them aboard grossly overloaded and unseaworthy vessels with little or no lifesaving equipment aboard. These vessels are known for taking on water throughout the entire voyage and could easily capsize at any given moment.”

While on a routine patrol Sept. 1, the crew of the cutter Robert Yered detected and interdicted an illegal migrant voyage, approximately 14 nautical miles northwest of Aguadilla, Puerto Rico.

The migrant group was traveling aboard a 28-foot makeshift boat that was transporting 20 men and a woman, who claimed to all be Dominican Republic nationals. The crew of cutter Robert Yered safely embarked the migrants for safety of life at sea concerns, while a Coast Guard HH-65 Dolphin helicopter from Air Station Borinquen provided rescue support overhead.

After embarking all migrants, the crew conducted biometrics processing for the group, which were analyzed by the National Counterterrorism Center. The records checks revealed a criminal and immigration history for one migrant, who is under further investigation and faces federal prosecution.

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. There were no migrants in this case reported to have any COVID-19 related symptoms.

Cutter Robert Yered transported the remaining migrants to Dominican Republic territorial waters off Punta Cana, where the transfer and repatriation of the migrants to Dominican Republic navy authorities was completed.

Cutter Robert Yered is a 154-foot fast response cutter homeported in Miami.