Coast Guard Interdicts 25 Migrants Off Mona Island, Puerto Rico

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Joseph Napier (WPC-1115) repatriated 22 of 25 Dominican migrants to a Dominican Republic Navy vessel Feb. 4, following the interdiction of a makeshift boat Feb. 2, approximately 20 nautical miles northwest of Mona Island, Puerto Rico, the Coast Guard 7th District said in a February release.

Three of the interdicted migrants are facing possible federal prosecution by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Puerto Rico for illegally attempting to re-enter the United States.

The Coast Guard and federal and Commonwealth of Puerto Rico law enforcement partners have interdicted more than 400 migrants and stopped several narcotics smuggling attempts since October of 2018.

"The migrants were attempting to make the transit across an ocean passage in a vessel that was inherently unsafe due to overloading, missing all required safety equipment, and operating without navigation lights," said Lt. John Schulz, cutter Joseph Napier commanding officer. "Many lives are lost each year by these types of ventures and are a direct threat to the people who attempt the voyage. Each person saved is a testament to how critical the Coast Guard and our partner agencies efforts are to ensuring that there is not a unnecessary loss of life in the waters surrounding Puerto Rico."

The crew of a Coast Guard HC-144 Ocean Sentry aircraft from Air Station Miami, while on a routine patrol of the Mona Passage, detected a 35-foot makeshift boat Friday night with

an undetermined number of passengers aboard transiting towards Puerto Rico.

The Coast Guard Cutter Joseph Napier was diverted and interdicted the migrant vessel Saturday morning embarking all 25 Dominican migrants, 24 men and a woman.

Following at-sea interdictions, illegal migrants that are stopped are repatriated to their country of origin or returned to their place of departure. In some cases, those migrants found to have a criminal history with possible connection to smuggling operations are turned over to law enforcement authorities for further prosecution by the Department of Justice. Once aboard a Coast Guard cutter, all migrants receive food, water, shelter and basic medical attention.

The Joseph Napier is a 154-foot fast response cutter homeported in San Juan, Puerto Rico.