

Coast Guard Interdicts 69 Illegal Migrants



The Cutter Richard Dixon interdicted 37 illegal migrants near Desecheo Island, Puerto Rico, on Jan. 29. The interdiction was one of three during the week. U.S. Coast Guard

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Valiant repatriated 44 of 69 Dominican migrants to a Dominican navy vessel on Feb. 3, following the interdiction of three separate illegal migrant voyages near Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, the Coast Guard 7th District said in a release.

Five of the interdicted migrants will remain in Puerto Rico to face possible federal prosecution on charges of attempting to illegally re-enter the United States.

The interdictions were a result of ongoing efforts in support of Operation Unified Resolve, Operation Caribbean Guard and the Caribbean Border Interagency Group (CBIG).

“These makeshift vessels were extremely overloaded and had been at sea for several days,” said Lt. Matthew Monahan, the Coast Guard Cutter Richard Dixon’s commanding officer.

“Those aboard had no food or water left and were likely abandoned by the individual promising them passage to Puerto Rico once the vessel ran out of fuel. These survivors were lucky to be located in time to receive aid from Coast Guard personnel, but this is frequently not the case. This is just another example of why this type of journey is exceptionally hazardous and should not be attempted under any circumstances.”

The first interdiction took place Jan. 28 after a U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Air and Marine Operations marine

patrol aircraft crew sighted a 22-foot migrant boat disabled and adrift, about 45 nautical miles northwest of Aguadilla, Puerto Rico. The Richard Dixon interdicted the illegal voyage and embarked all 13 migrants, 11 men and two women.

The second interdiction took place Jan. 29, after a CBP DHC-8 marine patrol aircraft crew sighted a 30-foot migrant boat disabled and adrift, about 12 nautical miles southwest of Desecheo Island, Puerto Rico. The Richard Dixon interdicted the illegal voyage and embarked all 37 migrants, 32 adult males and five females, including a 17-year-old minor.

The third interdiction took place Jan. 30, after the crew of a Coast Guard HC-144 Ocean Sentry marine patrol aircraft sighted a 30-foot migrant boat disabled and adrift, about 37 nautical miles south of Isla Saona, Dominican Republic. The Valiant interdicted the illegal voyage as a Dominican navy vessel also responded to the scene. Once on scene, the crew of the Dominican vessel embarked the migrants for their return to the Dominican Republic.

Once aboard a Coast Guard cutter, all migrants receive food, water, shelter and basic medical attention.

The crew of the cutter Valiant transferred the five migrants awaiting federal prosecution to Ramey Sector Border Patrol agents in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico.

The Richard Dixon is a 154-foot fast-response cutter homeported in San Juan, Puerto Rico, while the Valiant is a 210-foot medium-endurance cutter homeported in Mayport, Florida.