

Coast Guard Interdicts, Repatriates 33 Migrants to the Dominican Republic



The crew of the cutter Heriberto Hernandez small boat is on scene with an illegal voyage interdicted moments earlier in Mona Passage waters near Puerto Rico Oct. 6, 2020. The migrant vessel was the first of two illegal voyages interdicted by the cutter Heriberto Hernandez within hours of each other, which totaled 33 Dominican migrants, who were repatriated to a Dominican Republic Navy patrol boat near Punta Cana, Dominican Republic Oct. 7, 2020. U.S. Coast Guard

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – The Coast Guard Cutter Heriberto Hernandez (WPC-1114) repatriated 33 migrants to the Dominican Republic Oct. 7, following the interdiction of two illegal voyages in the Mona Passage near Puerto Rico, the Coast Guard 7th District said in a release.

The interdictions are the result of ongoing multiagency efforts in support of Operation Caribbean Guard and the Caribbean Border Interagency Group (CBIG).

“I’m proud of the crew of the Heriberto Hernandez and our fellow partner agencies, who responded and worked tirelessly throughout the night to interdict two migrant smuggling voyages and ensure all 33 migrants were safely recovered from these grossly overloaded and unseaworthy makeshift boats,” said Lt. Andrew Russo, Coast Guard Cutter Heriberto Hernandez (WPC-1114) commanding officer.

The first interdiction occurred late Tuesday night, after the crew of a U.S. Customs and Border Protection maritime patrol aircraft detected an illegal voyage 43 nautical miles north of Mona Island, Puerto Rico. Coast Guard watchstanders at Sector San Juan directed the launch of a Coast Guard HC-144 Ocean

Sentry aircraft from Air Station Miami to relieve the CBP aircraft and diverted the cutter Heriberto Hernandez to interdict the suspect vessel.

Once on scene, the crew of cutter Heriberto Hernandez interdicted the 25-foot makeshift boat and safely embarked 20 migrants, 19 men and a woman, for safety of life at sea concerns. The migrant group claimed to be Dominican Republic nationals.

The second interdiction occurred early Wednesday morning, after the crew of a U.S. Customs and Border Protection maritime patrol aircraft detected an illegal voyage 38 nautical miles northwest of Desecheo Island, Puerto Rico. Shortly thereafter, cutter Heriberto Hernandez arrived on scene and interdicted a 20-foot makeshift boat with the assistance of the cutter's small boat. The cutter crew safely embarked 13 migrants from the migrant vessel, two women and 11 men, all of whom claimed Dominican Republic nationality.

Once aboard the Coast Guard cutter, all migrants received 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 these cases reported to have any COVID-19 related symptoms.

Cutter Heriberto Hernandez rendezvoused and repatriated the migrants to a Dominican Republic Navy vessel near the Dominican Republic.

Cutter Heriberto Hernandez is a 154-foot fast response cutter homeported in San Juan, Puerto Rico.