Coast Guard Offloads $22 Million in Seized Cocaine in San Juan, Puerto Rico



Coast Guard Cutter Joseph Tezanos crewmembers offloaded 1,100 kilograms of cocaine, valued at $22 million dollars, at Coast Guard Base San Juan Aug. 8, following three separate interdictions of drug smuggling vessels near Puerto Rico. *U.S. COAST GUARD*

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Joseph Tezanos and Caribbean Corridor Strike Force agents offloaded 2,425 pounds of seized cocaine Aug. 8, following three separate at-sea interdictions near Puerto Rico, the Coast Guard 7th District said in a release.

Fourteen men, Dominican Republic nationals, apprehended in

these cases are facing federal prosecution in Puerto Rico. The seized contraband has an estimated wholesale value of approximately $22 million dollars.

These interdictions are the result of multi-agency efforts involving the Caribbean Border Interagency Group and the Caribbean Corridor Strike Force.

During the afternoon of Aug. 3, the aircrew of a Customs and Border Protection Air and Marine multi-role enforcement aircraft detected a 25-foot suspect vessel north of Aguadilla, Puerto Rico. During the interdiction, the smugglers jettisoned multiple bales of suspected contraband into the water. Coast Guard Cutter Joseph Tezanos, assisted by the aircrew of a Coast Guard HC-144 Ocean Sentry aircraft, stopped the suspect vessel, apprehended four men and recovered 13 bales of the jettisoned cargo that collectively weighted 1,653 pounds and tested positive for cocaine.

During the afternoon of July 29, the aircrew of Customs and Border Protection Air and Marine multi-role enforcement aircraft detected a 20-foot suspect vessel in waters northwest of Desecheo Island, Puerto Rico. During the interdiction, the smugglers jettisoned multiple bales of suspected contraband into the water. Cutter Joseph Tezanos stopped the smuggling vessel, apprehended four men and recovered eight bales of the jettisoned cargo that collectively weighted approximately 441 pounds and tested positive for cocaine.

During the afternoon of July 27, the aircrew of Coast Guard HC-144 Ocean Sentry aircraft detected a 20-foot suspect vessel in waters northwest of Aguadilla, Puerto Rico. During the interdiction, the smugglers jettisoned multiple bales of suspected contraband into the water. Cutter Joseph Tezanos arrived on scene and stopped the non-compliant vessel, apprehended six men and recovered three bales of the jettisoned cargo that collectively weighted approximately 330 pounds and tested positive for cocaine.

“These successful interdictions reflect the unwavering resolve and strong partnerships between the Coast Guard and our Caribbean Border Interagency Group partners in stopping illicit drug trafficking in the high seas,” said Capt. José E. Díaz, commander of Coast Guard Sector San Juan. “I’m proud of the professionalism and performance of the cutter Joseph Tezanos in apprehending 14 smugglers and preventing these drugs from reaching the shores and streets of Puerto Rico.”

Special Agents supporting the Caribbean Corridor Strike Force are leading the investigation into this case.

Cutter Joseph Tezanos is a 154-foot fast response cutter that is homeported in San Juan, Puerto Rico.