Coast Guard Offloads $3.5 million in Seized Cocaine, Transfers 3 Suspected Smugglers



The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Heriberto Hernandez offloaded $3.5 million in seized cocaine and transferred custody of three suspected smugglers in San Juan, Puerto Rico Oct. 29. *U.S. COAST GUARD*

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Heriberto Hernandez offloaded $3.5 million in cocaine Friday and transferred custody of three smugglers to federal agents in San Juan, Puerto Rico, the Coast Guard 7th District said Nov. 1.

The USS Sioux City, operating with a Coast Guard LEDET 102 onboard, apprehended three men and seized 115 kilograms of cocaine after interdicting of a drug smuggling go-fast vessel Oct. 26 in the Caribbean Sea, approximately 100 nautical miles south of Isla Saona, Dominican Republic.

The apprehended smugglers, two Dominican Republic nationals and one Colombian, are facing federal prosecution in Puerto Rico on criminal charges of Conspiracy to Possess with Intent to Distribute a Controlled Substance Aboard a Vessel Subject to the Jurisdiction of the United States and Possession of a Firearm During and in Relation to a Drug Trafficking Crime. The charges carry a minimum sentence of 10 years imprisonment and a maximum sentence of imprisonment for life. Transnational Organized Crime Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Jordan Martin from the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Puerto Rico is leading the prosecution for this case.

The interdiction is the result of multi-agency efforts in support of U.S. Southern Command's enhanced counter-narcotics operations in the Western Hemisphere, the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) and High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area programs, and the Caribbean Corridor Strike Force. OCDETF identifies, disrupts, and dismantles the highest-level criminal organizations that threaten the United States using a prosecutor-led, intelligence-driven, multi-agency approach. Additional information about the OCDETF Program can be found at https://www.justice.gov/OCDETF.

Following the interdiction, the Coast Guard Cutter Heriberto Hernandez embarked the three-suspected smugglers and seized contraband for transport to San Juan.

Coast Guard Cutter Heriberto Hernandez is a 154-foot fast response cutter homeported in San Juan, Puerto Rico, while the USS Sioux City is a littoral combat ship homeported at Naval Station Mayport in Jacksonville, Florida.