Coast Guard Offloads $38.5 million in Interdicted Cocaine



The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Heriberto Hernandez (WPC-1114) offloaded 55 bales of cocaine weighing 1,375 kilograms at Sector San Juan July 22, 2020. U.S. COAST GUARD / Ricardo Castrodad

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – The crew of the Coast Guard Heriberto Hernandez (WPC-1114) offloaded approximately 1,375 kilograms of cocaine at Sector San Juan on July 22, following the disruption of a drug smuggling go-fast in the Caribbean Sea, the Coast Guard 7th District said in a release.

The seized drug shipment is estimated to have a wholesale value of more than $38.5 million.

The interdiction was the result of multi-agency efforts in support of U.S. Southern Command's enhanced counter-narcotics operations in the Western Hemisphere and during Operation CASTNET II, in coordination with Joint Task Force East.

"I'm extremely proud of my crew as well as the performance and reliability of the Coast Guard fast response cutter," said Lt. Russo, cutter Heriberto Hernandez commanding officer. "The crew's proficiency in using all of the cutter's systems and capabilities throughout our patrol gave us the ability to effectively operate deep inside the Caribbean Sea, which led to this successful outcome and prevented over a ton of cocaine from ever reaching the streets."

The disruption and seizure occurred during a patrol the afternoon of July 16, 2020, when the crew of the cutter Heriberto Hernandez came upon a suspect go-fast vessel.

As the cutter Heriberto Hernandez closed in to interdict the go-fast, the smugglers detected the cutter’s presence and began to jettison multiple bales of suspected contraband while fleeing the area at high speed. The crew of the Heriberto Hernandez conducted a thorough sweep of the area where the jettison occurred, and they were able to recover 55 bales of suspected contraband. The recovered bales tested positive for cocaine.

The cutter Heriberto Hernandez transported the seized contraband to Sector San Juan, where it was received by awaiting federal law enforcement agents in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

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