Coast Guard Offloads Nearly $20 million in Seized Cocaine in San Juan, Puerto Rico



The Coast Guard Cutter Richard Dixon crew offloaded nearly $20 million in seized cocaine at Coast Guard Base San Juan on April 20. *U.S. COAST GUARD*

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – The Coast Guard Cutter Richard Dixon crew offloaded nearly $20 million in seized cocaine at Coast Guard Base San Juan on April 20, following the interdiction of a suspected drug smuggling vessel, approximately 45 nautical miles north of Aguadilla, Puerto Rico, the Coast Guard 7th District said in an April 21 release.

A Customs and Border Protection Caribbean Air and Marine Branch maritime patrol aircraft crew detected a vessel on April 17 with three people aboard suspected of drug trafficking. The Coast Guard Cutter Paul Clark and a Coast

Guard MH-60 helicopter responded to intercept the vessel.

The Coast Guard Jayhawk aircrew successfully stopped the vessel. Following the interdiction, it was discovered one of the suspected smugglers was injured and needed to be medevaced. A Coast Guard Air Station Borinquen MH-65 Dolphin aircrew transported the person to a hospital in Puerto Rico to receive further medical care.

The Paul Clark crew embarked the two remaining suspected smugglers and recovered close to 18 bales, which weighed approximately 1,052 pounds and tested positive for cocaine.

The three suspects are two men and a woman, Dominican Republic nationals, who are facing possible federal prosecution on drug trafficking criminal charges. Department of Justice partners in the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Puerto Rico are leading prosecution efforts in this case.

"Stopping illegal drug trafficking vessels like the one interdicted Saturday is inherently dangerous and involves a high level of skill and risk," said Capt. Gregory H. Magee, Commander of U.S. Coast Guard Sector San Juan. "These vessels represent a serious threat to the Caribbean region. The professionalism of the interdicting crews and strong partnerships with federal, local and regional law enforcement led to the apprehension of three smugglers and seizure of a major drug shipment in our shared resolve to protect the people of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands from this threat."

The interdiction resulted from 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 and High-Intensity Drug-Trafficking Area programs and the DEA Caribbean Division Financial Investigative Team.

"This Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force

investigation is one of several cases targeting transnational criminal organizations operating out of South America, Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico," said A.J. Collazo, DEA Caribbean Division special agent in charge. "DEA will continue to work alongside other federal agencies as more seizures like this one can be expected."

Cutters Paul Clark and Richard Dixon are 154-foot fast response cutters respectively homeported in Miami and San Juan, Puerto Rico.