Coast Guard Repatriates 12 Dominican Migrants Following Interdiction



The Coast Guard Cutter Heriberto Hernandez, which repatriated 12 migrants from the Dominican Republic on Sept. 1. U.S. Coast Guard/Petty Officer 2nd Class Mark Barney

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – The Coast Guard Cutter Heriberto Hernandez (WPC-1114) repatriated 12 migrants to the Dominican Republic Navy patrol boat Proción (GC-103) Sept. 1 near Samaná, Dominican Republic, following the interdiction of an illegal migrant voyage in Mona Passage waters near Puerto Rico, the Coast Guard 7th District said in a release.

The interdiction is the result of ongoing efforts in support of Operation Unified Resolve, Operation Caribbean Guard and the Caribbean Border Interagency Group (CBIG).

Coast Guard watchstanders at the Sector San Juan Command Center received a report at 5:30 p.m. Aug. 31 from the aircrew of a Coast Guard Air Station Miami HC-144 Ocean Sentry aircraft on a routine patrol of the Mona Passage. The aircrew reported sighting what appeared to be an illegal migrant vessel transiting

eastbound, about 51 nautical miles north of Mona Island, Puerto Rico.

Coast Guard watchstanders diverted the cutter Heriberto Hernandez to the scene. Once on scene, the cutter's crew stopped the 18-foot makeshift boat and safely embarked, for safety of life at sea concerns, the nine men and three women who were aboard. The interdicted migrants claimed to be of Dominican nationality.

"I'm proud of all our Coast Guard crews who quickly returned in full force to protect the coasts and our citizens in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands following the passing of Hurricane Dorian through the Eastern Caribbean," said Capt. Eric King, commander of Sector San Juan. "Their efforts prevented this illegal migrant voyage from reaching our shores and saving 12 lives from a highly dangerous situation, since migrant voyages often take place aboard grossly overloaded and unseaworthy vessels with little or on no lifesaving equipment onboard."

Once aboard a Coast Guard cutter, all migrants receive food, water, shelter and basic medical attention.

The Caribbean Border Interagency Group unifies efforts between U.S. Customs and Border Protection, the U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the United States Attorney's Office for the District of Puerto Rico and Puerto

Rico Police Joint Forces of Rapid Action.

These agencies share a common goal of securing the maritime border of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands against illegal migrant and drug smuggling threats. The Heriberto Hernandez is a 154-foot fast response cutter homeported in San Juan, Puerto Rico.