

Coast Guard repatriates 32 aliens to Dominican Republic Navy following vessel interdiction off Desecheo, Puerto Rico



Coast Guard Cutter Heriberto Hernandez's small boat transfers a group of people during the repatriation of 32 aliens to a Dominican Republic Navy vessel, June 7, 2026. The aliens were interdicted a day earlier off Desecheo, Puerto Rico, as part of Homeland Security Task Force – San Juan Region efforts to combat human smuggling and deter unlawful maritime migration. (U.S. Coast Guard photo)

From U.S. Coast Guard Southeast District, June 9, 2026

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Heriberto Hernandez repatriated 32 aliens to a

Dominican Republic Navy vessel at sea, Sunday, following the interdiction of a makeshift vessel near Desecheo, Puerto Rico.

This interdiction is part of the efforts of the Homeland Security Task Force – San Juan Region to combat human smuggling and deter unlawful maritime migration.

Sector San Juan watchstanders received a report from the aircrew of a Customs and Border Protection aircraft of a grossly overloaded 20 to 30-foot makeshift vessel off Desecheo, Puerto Rico. With assistance from the Customs and Border Protection aircrew, the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Heriberto Hernandez interdicted the suspect vessel.

Following the interdiction, the crew safely embarked 36 Dominican Republic, three Haitian and one Uzbek nationals.

“This successful outcome is due to the professionalism and unwavering resolve of our Coast Guard crews and Homeland Security Task Force partners stopping unlawful migration voyages at sea,” said Cmdr. Matthew Romano, Sector San Juan chief of response. “To anyone thinking of taking part in an unlawful maritime migration voyage, don’t take to the sea! These voyages are extremely dangerous and most often involve grossly overloaded and unseaworthy vessels that take on water and have no lifesaving equipment. Those caught taking part in an unlawful voyage could face possible prosecution or be repatriated to their country of origin or country from where the voyage originated.”

This interdiction is part of the Homeland Security Task Force (HSTF) initiative established by Executive Order 14159, Protecting the American People Against Invasion. The HSTF is a whole-of-government partnership dedicated to eliminating criminal cartels, foreign gangs, transnational criminal organizations, and human smuggling and trafficking rings operating in the United States and abroad. Through

historic interagency collaboration, the HSTF directs the full might of United States law enforcement towards identifying, investigating, and prosecuting the full spectrum of crimes committed by these organizations, which have long fueled violence and instability within our borders. In performing this work, the HSTF places special emphasis on investigating and prosecuting those engaged in child trafficking or other crimes involving children. The HSTF further utilizes all available tools to prosecute and remove the most violent criminal aliens from the United States.

HSTF San Juan comprises agents and officers from the following federal partners: FBI, ICE-HSI, CBP (OFO, AMO and Border Patrol), the U.S. Marshals Service for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, DEA, ATF, IRS, U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Coast Guard Investigative Service, U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the Department of State, and the U.S. Secret Service, the Puerto Rico/U.S. Virgin Islands HIDTA, TSA, FAA, and the U.S. Attorney's Offices for the Districts of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The HSTF also has the following state and local law enforcement partners as participating agencies: the Puerto Rico Police Department; the San Juan, Carolina, Guaynabo, Barceloneta, and Ponce Municipal Police Departments, the Puerto Rico National Guard – Counter Drug Program; the Puerto Rico Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation; the Puerto Rico Internal Revenue Service (Hacienda); the Puerto Rico Port Authority; and the Virgin Islands Police Department.