Coast Guard Repatriates 5 of 9 Migrants Following Interdiction in the Mona Passage

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – The crew of the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Bernard Webber, working alongside their Caribbean Border Interagency Group partners on the night of May 12, interdicted an illegal migrant voyage in the Mona Passage off Puerto Rico, the Coast Guard 7th District said in a release.

Nine migrants were interdicted, all of whom were reported to be Dominican Republic nationals. Five of the migrants were repatriated to the Dominican while four remain in U.S. custody. Three of the four face criminal immigration charges.

While on a routine patrol in the Mona Passage late on May 12, the Bernard Webber's crew stopped the 25-foot yola-type vessel and embarked all nine migrants. Once aboard a cutter, all migrants receive food, water, shelter and basic medical attention.

The migrants facing potential federal prosecution and investigation were transferred to Border Patrol agents in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico, while the remaining migrants were transported by the Bernard Webber to Dominican waters off Punta Cana, where they were repatriated to a Dominican navy vessel.

"In the midst of this ongoing pandemic and upcoming hurricane season, the security of our nation's southernmost maritime border has never been as important and relevant as today," said Capt. Eric P. King, commander of U.S. Coast Guard Sector San Juan. "Our forces remain vigilant and ready to safeguard our fellow citizens in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands

from illegal voyages, drug smuggling threats and in case of any potential tropical storms or hurricanes.”