Coast Guard Repatriates 58 migrants to the Dominican Republic



The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Joseph Tezanos small boat is on scene with one of two illegal voyages that were interdicted by the cutter, during separate cases, in the Mona Passage waters March 6, 2021. The 58 migrants from both interdictions were repatriated at-sea to a Dominican Republic Navy vessel near the Dominican Republic March 7, 2021. *U.S. Coast Guard*

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – The Coast Guard repatriated 58 migrants to the Dominican Republic March 8, following the interdiction of two illegal voyages in Mona Passage waters between the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, the Coast Guard 7th District said in a March 8 release.

The interdicted migrants claimed to be Dominican Republic nationals.

The interdictions are the result of ongoing efforts by Caribbean Border Interagency Group (CBIG) partner agencies to combat illegal migrant smuggling.

“These illegal voyages are the most deadly means of conveyance,” said Cmdr. Beau Powers, Sector San Juan chief of response. “They are dangerous and mostly involve makeshift, grossly overloaded and unseaworthy vessels. These vessels continuously flood and have the potential to capsize at any given time. To those considering taking part in an illegal voyage, do not take to the sea! You are putting your life at risk as well as the life of everyone else.”

The aircrew of a Customs and Border Protection marine patrol aircraft detected the first illegal voyage Saturday morning. The CBP aircrew spotted a grossly overloaded 30-foot makeshift vessel 49 nautical miles west of Aguadilla, Puerto Rico. Coast Guard watchstanders launched an MH-65 Dolphin helicopter from Air Station Borinquen and diverted the Coast Guard Cutter Joseph Tezanos to interdict the suspect vessel. Shortly thereafter, the cutter Joseph Tezanos arrived on scene and stopped the migrant vessel with the assistance of the cutter’s small boat. The crew of the cutter Joseph Tezanos safely embarked 34 migrants, 32 men and two women.

The second interdiction occurred Saturday afternoon, after the crew of a U.S. Customs and Border Protection marine patrol aircraft detected a suspect illegal voyage, in waters northeast of Punta Cana, Dominican Republic. Coast Guard watchstanders at Sector San Juan diverted the cutter Joseph Tezanos to interdict the suspect vessel. Once on scene, the cutter Joseph Tezanos interdicted a 25-foot grossly overloaded makeshift boat and safely embarked the 24 migrants, 20 men and four women, who were aboard.

In both cases, the crew of the cutter Joseph Tezanos had to provide lifejackets/personal flotation devices to the migrants. Once they were safely aboard the cutter, the

migrants also received food, water and basic medical attention.

The cutter Joseph Tezanos later rendezvoused with and transferred the migrants to a Dominican Republic Navy vessel in waters just off the Dominican Republic completing their repatriation.