Coast Guard Repatriates 66 Migrants to Dominican Republic

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The Coast Guard Cutter Escanaba (WMEC-907) interdicted this 30-foot makeshift boat with 28 migrants on board on May 21 about 20 nautical miles northwest of Aguadilla, Puerto Rico. SAN JUAN,

Puerto Rico — The Coast Guard repatriated 66 migrants on May 23 to a Dominican navy

vessel in waters off the Dominican Republic following the interdiction of three

illegal migrant vessels in the Mona Passage earlier that week, the Coast Guard

7th District said in a release.

Two of the

interdicted migrants, one Haitian and a Dominican man, remain in federal

custody facing possible prosecution by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the

District of Puerto Rico on potential charges of attempted illegal re-entry into

a U.S. territory.

The

interdictions are the result of ongoing efforts in support of Operation Unified

Resolve, Operation Caribbean Guard and the Caribbean Border Interagency Group (CBIG).

"I'm

extremely proud of my crew and the collaboration with our Caribbean Border

Interagency Group partners," said Cmdr. Michael A. Nalli, commanding officer of

the Coast Guard Cutter Escanaba (WMEC-907).

"Our

collective efforts led to the successful interdiction of three grossly

overloaded, unseaworthy vessels and the safe recovery of all 68 migrants. Crossing

the Mona Passage in these makeshift vessels is an extremely dangerous voyage,

where the migrants risk losing their lives or the life of a loved one."

While on a

routine patrol in the Mona Passage on May 21, crews of Customs and Border

Protection DHC-8 maritime patrol aircraft detected the two migrant vessels

transiting without navigational lights. The first boat was located 43 nautical

miles north of Aguadilla, Puerto Rico, while the second was detected about 15

nautical miles northwest of Desecheo Island, Puerto Rico.

Coast Guard watchstanders

in Sector San Juan diverted cutter Escanaba to interdict the suspect vessels.

Shortly thereafter, and with the cutter boat's assistance, the Escanaba

interdicted a 20-foot makeshift boat with 19 adult migrants onboard. The

Escanaba crew embarked 14 men and five women who claimed Dominican nationality.

Following the

first interdiction, the Escanaba proceeded to intercept the second migrant

vessel. Once on scene, the Escanaba crew and a CBP Caribbean Air and Marine

interceptor surface unit stopped a 25-foot makeshift boat with
21 adult

migrants onboard. The Escanaba crew embarked 18 men and three women of

Dominican nationality.

A third

migrant vessel was detected the night of May 21 by the crew of a CBP DHC-8

maritime patrol aircraft about 20 nautical miles northwest of Aguadilla. Escanaba's

crew interdicted the 30-foot makeshift boat and safely embarked 28 adult

migrants, 21 men and seven women of Dominican nationality as well as a Haitian man.

Once aboard a

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

The Escanaba

transferred custody of the two migrants facing federal prosecution to the Coast

Guard Cutter Richard Dixon (WPB-1113) for further transfer to Ramey Sector

Border Patrol agents in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico.