Coast Guard Repatriates 74 Dominican Migrants After Four At-Sea Interdictions

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — The Coast Guard returned 74 Dominican migrants to law enforcement authorities in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, Nov. 27 following the at-sea interdictions of four migrant vessels off Puerto Rico, the 7th Coast Guard District said in a release.

The interdictions were a result of ongoing efforts in support of Operation Unified Resolve, Operation Caribbean Guard and the Caribbean Border Interagency Group.

“While smugglers will continue to sell false promises and mislead migrants into unsafe and illegal attempts to cross maritime borders, the Coast Guard and our partners will continue to diligently patrol the Florida Straits and Caribbean Sea to stop these voyages before they end in tragedy and ensure the security of the United States,” said Capt. James Passarelli, chief of staff of the 7th Coast Guard District. “When these voyages are discovered by the Coast Guard or by our partners, these migrants are rescued from their unseaworthy vessels, cared for humanely by our crews, and promptly repatriated to their country of origin or departure.”

Ramey Sector Border Patrol agents detected the first migrant vessel early Nov. 25, approximately eight nautical miles west of Punta Borinquen in Aguadilla, Puerto Rico. Coast Guard watchstanders diverted the Cutter Resolute that responded along with a Puerto Rico Police Joint Forces of Rapid Action marine unit. The crew of the police marine unit interdicted the makeshift boat that was carrying nine people onboard, seven men and two women, who claimed Dominican nationality.

Resolute arrived on scene shortly thereafter, safely embarked the migrants and destroyed the migrant vessel as a hazard to navigation. The migrants were subsequently transferred from the Resolute to the Cutter Donald Horsley.

Donald Horsley interdicted a second migrant vessel Nov. 25, after the crew of a patrolling Coast Guard HC-144 Ocean Sentry aircraft detected the 25-foot makeshift boat, approximately 12 nautical miles off Mona Island, Puerto Rico. The cutter crew safely embarked 16 Dominican men from the migrant boat and destroyed the vessel as a hazard to navigation.

The crew of a patrolling MH-65 Dolphin helicopter detected a third migrant vessel Nov. 26, approximately three nautical miles off the northern coast of Camuy, Puerto Rico. Responding Puerto Rico Police Joint Forces of Rapid Action marine units interdicted the 28-foot makeshift boat that was carrying 18 Dominican men onboard. Donald Horsley arrived on scene shortly thereafter and safely embarked the migrants, while Puerto Rico Police crews took custody of the migrant boat.

During a routine patrol of the Mona Passage Nov. 26, the crew of a Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Caribbean Air and Marine DHC-8 maritime patrol aircraft detected a 30-foot makeshift boat, approximately 35 nautical miles northwest of Aguadilla. Donald Horsley and a CBP marine unit arrived on scene and interdicted the migrant vessel with 31 people onboard, 27 men and four women, who claimed Dominican nationality. The Donald Horsley crew safely embarked the migrants, while the crew of the CBP marine unit took custody of the migrant vessel.

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

Resolute is a 210-foot medium endurance cutter homeported in Key West, Florida, while Donald Horsley is a 154-foot fast response cutter homeported in San Juan.