

Coast Guard Returns 71 Migrants to the Dominican Republic Following At-Sea Interdictions

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – The Coast Guard returned 71 of 81 interdicted migrants to law enforcement authorities in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, over the weekend following multiple at-sea interdictions off Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, the 7th District Coast Guard said in a Nov. 6 release.

Ten other migrants interdicted are facing federal prosecution in Puerto Rico for attempting to illegally re-enter a U.S. territory.

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

“Each vessel was grossly overloaded, which created an extremely dangerous and life-threatening situation for the people aboard,” said Cmdr. Christopher Douglas, chief of response for Coast Guard Sector San Juan. “The great coordination between the Coast Guard and our interagency partners prevented significant loss of life at sea.

“The Coast Guard and our local partners maintain a robust patrol presence in Puerto Rico and the Caribbean with both air and surface assets, and any migrant interdicted at sea regardless of nationality will be repatriated back to their country of origin,” he said.

During patrols from Oct. 31 through Nov. 2, aircrews with a Coast Guard HC-144 Ocean Sentry maritime patrol aircraft

detected three grossly overloaded, makeshift boats in international waters traveling illegally toward Puerto Rico. The Coast Guard Cutter Richard Dixon crew interdicted and safely embarked 16 migrants from one vessel on Oct. 31; 53 migrants from a second vessel on Nov. 1 with the help of Customs and Border Protection Air and Marine Operations-Caribbean Air and Marine Branch crews; and 12 migrants from a third vessel on Nov. 2.

Dixon and Coast Guard Cutter Decisive returned the 71 migrants to Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. The 10 migrants facing prosecution were transferred to the custody of Ramey Sector Border Patrol agents in Puerto Rico.

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

Decisive is a 210-foot medium-endurance cutter homeported in Pensacola, Florida, while Richard Dixon is a 154-foot fast response cutter homeported in San Juan.