# Cutter Heriberto Hernandez Repatriates 12 Dominican Migrants

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Heriberto Hernandez repatriated 12 Dominicans and returned two Haitians to Dominican authorities Oct. 14, following the interdiction of a migrant vessel Oct. 11 in waters just off Mona Island, Puerto Rico, the 7th Coast Guard District said in a release.

The interdiction is the result of ongoing efforts in support of Operation Unified Resolve, Operation Caribbean Guard and the Caribbean Border Interagency Group (CBIG).

Two of the interdicted male migrants are Dominican nationals, who are facing potential federal criminal immigration charges in Puerto Rico for attempted illegal re-entry into the United States.

“The outstanding work by the Coast Guard and our interagency partners focused on humanitarian efforts and preventing loss of life at sea,” said Lt. Cmdr. Rafael Battle, U.S. Coast Guard Heriberto Hernandez commanding officer. “The Mona Passage is a volatile waterway with heavy seas. Transiting on dangerously overloaded and unseaworthy vessels poses large risk to anyone making the journey from the Dominican Republic to Puerto Rico. Fortunately, we discovered and saved 16 people before they encountered other potential dangers.”

During a routine patrol of the Mona Passage on the night of Oct. 11, the crew of a Coast Guard HC-144 Ocean Sentry maritime patrol aircraft detected a grossly overloaded 25-foot migrant boat transiting without navigational lights, approximately 10 nautical miles north of Mona Island, Puerto Rico. Coast Guard watchstanders in Sector San Juan diverted

Heriberto Hernandez to interdict the vessel. The crew of Heriberto Hernandez arrived on scene, stopped the boat and safely embarked all 16 migrants: 14 Dominican nationals, 10 men and four women, and two Haitian men.

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

Ramey Sector Border Patrol Agents in Puerto Rico received custody of the two migrants facing prosecution, while the Heriberto Hernandez later rendezvoused with a Dominican Republic navy vessel and transferred custody of the remaining migrants to Dominican authorities.

The Coast Guard's efforts under Operation Unified Resolve contribute to the interagency results being achieved locally under Operation Caribbean Guard, which coordinates efforts between the Coast Guard, its Department of Homeland Security, Commonwealth and Territorial law enforcement partners, who are working diligently to deter, detect and disrupt illicit maritime trafficking to Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

CBIG unifies efforts between U.S. Customs and Border Protection, the U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the United States Attorney's Office for the District of Puerto Rico, and Puerto Rico Police Joint Forces of Rapid Action, in their common goal of securing the borders of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands against illegal migrant and drug smuggling.

The Heriberto Hernandez is a 154-foot fast-response cutter homeported in San Juan.