

Coast Guard, Border Patrol Seize \$1.9 million in Cocaine; Apprehend 2 Smugglers



A U.S. Border Patrol K-9 rests after U.S. Ramey Sector Border Patrol agents, with the assistance of a U.S. Coast Guard HC-144 Ocean Sentry aircrew, apprehended two male Dominican Republic nationals and seized 157 pounds (71 Kilos) of cocaine with a wholesale value of \$1.9 million, during a maritime drug smuggling attempt near Villa Montana in Isabela, Puerto Rico Jan. 23. U.S. Border Patrol

AGUADILLA, Puerto Rico – A Coast Guard aircrew combined efforts with U.S. Border Patrol agents during a drug smuggling event Jan. 23 that resulted in the seizure of 157 pounds (71 Kilos) of cocaine and the arrest of two suspected smugglers from the Dominican Republic near Villa Montana in Isabela, Puerto Rico, the Coast Guard 7th District said in a Jan. 27 release.

The estimated wholesale value of the seized cocaine is \$1.9 million.

The joint collaboration is the result of ongoing Caribbean Border Interagency Group CBIG multiagency efforts in their common goal of securing the borders of Puerto Rico against illegal threats.

“We continue to disrupt and apprehend smugglers that attempt to smuggle people and narcotics across our borders,” said Xavier Morales, chief patrol agent for the Ramey Sector.

“Once our crew located the vessel, U.S. Border Patrol responded quickly to seize the suspects and narcotics. Our

partnership is integral to protecting our shores and keeping our community safe,” said Lt. Karl Alejandre, Coast Guard Air Station Miami HC-144 Ocean Sentry aircraft commander.

While on a routine patrol Saturday night, the crew of a Coast Guard aircraft detected a suspect 21-foot go-fast vessel, approximately four nautical miles northwest of Aguadilla, Puerto Rico. Coast Guard watchstanders in Sector San Juan alerted the U.S. Border Patrol from Ramey Sector and placed the Coast Guard aircrew in direct communication with responding Border Patrol units ashore. While maintaining aerial surveillance of the vessel, the Coast Guard aircrew vectored in the Border Patrol units to the location where the suspected smugglers made landfall. Shortly thereafter, the Border Patrol agents, which included a K-9 unit, apprehended the two men and seized 58 packages of cocaine.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement – Homeland Security Investigations assumed custody the contraband and the suspected smugglers for investigation and prosecution.