

Coast Guard Offloads \$15 million in Seized Cocaine



The crew of the Coast Guard Joseph Tezanos offloads nearly \$15 million in cocaine and transfers custody of two suspected smugglers at Coast Guard Base San Juan July 12, 2021. *U.S. COAST GUARD*

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – The Coast Guard Cutter Joseph Tezanos crew offloaded nearly \$15 million in seized cocaine and transferred custody of two male smugglers at Coast Guard Base San Juan Monday, following the interdiction of a go-fast vessel in Mona Passage waters near Mona Island, Puerto Rico, the Coast Guard 7th District said in a July 13 release.

The interdiction resulted from multi-agency efforts in support of U.S. Southern Command's enhanced counter-narcotics operations in the Western Hemisphere and coordination with the Caribbean Corridor Strike Force (CCSF). The United States Attorney's Office for the District of Puerto Rico is leading the prosecution for this case.

During a routine patrol July 11, a Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Air and Marine Operations (AMO) Multi-Role Enforcement Aircraft (MEA) aircrew detected two men aboard a go-fast vessel suspected of drug trafficking. Coast Guard Cutter Joseph Tezanos, operating in the vicinity with a CBP AMO Officer onboard, diverted and responded in hot pursuit to interdict the suspect vessel.

Shortly thereafter, cutter Joseph Tezanos arrived on scene and interdicted the go-fast vessel with the assistance of the cutter's small boat.

The crew of cutter Joseph Tezanos embarked the suspected smugglers and located loose packages aboard the 24-foot go-fast vessel, and they also recovered packages from the water

that were jettisoned from the go-fast vessel. In total, the crew of Joseph Tezanos seized 502 packages of cocaine with a combined weight of approximately 1,104 pounds.

“I directly attribute the success of this interdiction to the close interoperability that the Coast Guard has with CBP and my crew’s phenomenal performance during the pursuit, boarding and towing of the go-fast vessel,” said Lt. Anthony Orr, Cutter Joseph Tezanos commanding officer. “It was a pleasure to work with the crew of the CBP aircraft, who vectored the cutter to intercept the go-fast vessel. Having a CBP Air and Marine Operations pilot onboard the cutter during the case proved very fruitful as the crew and pilot shared best practices, which can only help in future joint cases. As Joseph Tezanos completes her patrol, we return home with the pride that half a metric ton of cocaine will not make it to the streets. ”

“The Caribbean Air and Marine Branch values its partnerships that result in successful seizures like this one,” said Hector Rojas, Director of the Caribbean Air and Marine Branch. “Our agents will continue to use our advanced aeronautical and maritime capabilities to detect and interdict smuggling attempts throughout our coastal borders.”

Cutter Joseph Tezanos is a 154-foot fast response cutter homeported in San Juan, Puerto Rico.