

Coast Guard Repatriates 48 Interdicted Migrants to the Dominican Republic



The Coast Guard Cutter Charles David Jr. (WPC-1107) repatriates a group of 21 Dominican migrants to a Dominican Republic Navy patrol boat just off the Dominican Republic, Oct. 16, 2020. U.S. Coast Guard

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – The Coast Guard returned 28 migrants to the Dominican Republic between Friday and Sunday, while 20 other migrants were repatriated Oct. 12, following the interdiction of three illegal voyages in the Mona Passage near Puerto Rico, the Coast Guard 7th District said in an Oct. 19 release.

One of the interdicted migrants remains in Puerto Rico to face possible federal prosecution on charges of attempted illegal reentry into the United States. Seven of the interdicted migrants claimed to be Brazilian nationals, while the remaining claimed Dominican Republic nationality.

The interdictions are the result of ongoing multiagency efforts in support of Operation Caribbean Guard and the Caribbean Border Interagency Group (CBIG).

“We value the strong collaboration and professionalism which exists between the Coast Guard, our sister federal law enforcement agencies, and our long-standing partners of the Puerto Rico Police,” said Capt. Gregory H. Magee, Sector San Juan commander. “Our collective response in these three cases helped save the lives of 49 migrants, who were endangered by the unsafe conditions of traveling aboard grossly overloaded and unseaworthy makeshift boats, which most often have no lifesaving equipment and are continuously taking on water.”

The first interdiction occurred the night of Oct. 11 and early morning of Oct. 12, when the crew of a Puerto Rico Police Joint Forces of Rapid Action marine unit stopped a 28-foot makeshift boat, approximately three nautical miles west of Aguadilla, Puerto Rico. Coast Guard watchstanders diverted the Coast Guard Cutter Vigilant (WMEC-617) and the Coast Guard Cutter Winslow Griesser (WPC-1116) to the scene.

Once on scene with the migrant vessel, the crew of the cutter Vigilant safely embarked 21 migrants, 20 men and a woman. After embarking all migrants, the crew learned that one migrant, who is now facing federal prosecution by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Puerto Rico, had a criminal and immigration history. U.S. Border Patrol agents received custody of the migrant in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico.

The second interdiction occurred Oct. 14, when the crew of a Puerto Rico Police Joint Forces of Rapid Action marine unit stopped a 20-foot makeshift boat, approximately half a mile west of Aguada, Puerto Rico. Coast Guard watchstanders diverted the Coast Guard Cutter Charles David Jr. (WPC-1107) that arrived on scene and, with the help of the cutter's crew, embarked 10 migrants, nine men and a woman.

The third interdiction occurred Oct. 15 morning, after the crew of a U.S. Customs and Border Protection maritime patrol aircraft detected an illegal voyage, approximately 60 nautical miles northwest of Aguadilla, Puerto Rico. The cutter Charles David Jr. responded to the sighting and interdicted a 26-foot makeshift boat. The cutter's crew safely embarked 18 migrants from the migrant vessel, 12 men and six women, seven of whom claimed Brazilian nationality.

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

The 48 migrants were transferred to a Dominican Republic navy

vessel for their return to the Dominican Republic.

Cutter Charles David Jr. and cutter Winslow Griesser are fast response cutters respectively homeported in Key West, Florida, and San Juan, Puerto Rico. Cutter Vigilant is a medium endurance cutter homeported in Port Canaveral, Florida.