

# Coast Guard Repatriates 66 Migrants to Dominican Republic



The Coast Guard Cutter Escanaba (WMEC-907) interdicted this 30-foot makeshift boat with 28 migrants on board on May 21 about 20 nautical miles northwest of Aguadilla, Puerto Rico.

SAN JUAN,

Puerto Rico – The Coast Guard repatriated 66 migrants on May 23 to a Dominican navy vessel in waters off the Dominican Republic following the interdiction of three illegal migrant vessels in the Mona Passage earlier that week, the Coast Guard 7th District said in a release.

Two of the interdicted migrants, one Haitian and a Dominican man, remain in federal custody facing possible prosecution by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Puerto Rico on potential charges of attempted illegal re-entry into a U.S. territory.

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

"I'm extremely proud of my crew and the collaboration with our Caribbean Border

Interagency Group partners,” said Cmdr. Michael A. Nalli, commanding officer of the Coast Guard Cutter Escanaba (WMEC-907).

“Our collective efforts led to the successful interdiction of three grossly overloaded, unseaworthy vessels and the safe recovery of all 68 migrants. Crossing the Mona Passage in these makeshift vessels is an extremely dangerous voyage, where the migrants risk losing their lives or the life of a loved one.”

While on a routine patrol in the Mona Passage on May 21, crews of Customs and Border Protection DHC-8 maritime patrol aircraft detected the two migrant vessels transiting without navigational lights. The first boat was located 43 nautical miles north of Aguadilla, Puerto Rico, while the second was detected about 15 nautical miles northwest of Desecheo Island, Puerto Rico.

Coast Guard watchstanders in Sector San Juan diverted cutter Escanaba to interdict the suspect vessels. Shortly thereafter, and with the cutter boat’s assistance, the Escanaba interdicted a 20-foot makeshift boat with 19 adult migrants onboard. The Escanaba crew embarked 14 men and five women who claimed Dominican nationality.

Following the first interdiction, the Escanaba proceeded to intercept the second migrant

vessel. Once on scene, the Escanaba crew and a CBP Caribbean Air and Marine interceptor surface unit stopped a 25-foot makeshift boat with 21 adult migrants onboard. The Escanaba crew embarked 18 men and three women of Dominican nationality.

A third migrant vessel was detected the night of May 21 by the crew of a CBP DHC-8 maritime patrol aircraft about 20 nautical miles northwest of Aguadilla. Escanaba's crew interdicted the 30-foot makeshift boat and safely embarked 28 adult migrants, 21 men and seven women of Dominican nationality as well as a Haitian man.

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

The Escanaba transferred custody of the two migrants facing federal prosecution to the Coast Guard Cutter Richard Dixon (WPB-1113) for further transfer to Ramey Sector Border Patrol agents in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico.