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CBP Agents Seize Cocaine Valued at \$9.5 Million in Puerto Rico

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Cocaine worth over \$9 million intercepted about 10 nautical miles south of Desecheo island in Puerto Rico. By. CBP USVI & Puerto Rico

Marine Interdiction Agents from the U.S. Customs and Border Protection’s Air and Marine Operations (AMO) intercepted a 24-foot vessel transporting approximately 913 pounds (414 Kilograms) of cocaine, about 10 nautical miles south of Desecheo island in Puerto Rico on Tuesday. The estimated street value of the seized narcotics is approximately \$9.5 million.

“Criminal organization seek to smuggle both migrants and contraband through the western coast of Puerto Rico,” stated Creighton Skeen, Acting Director of Air and Marine Operations at the Caribbean Air and Marine Branch (CAMB). “AMO continues to use its resources, technology,

and maritime domain awareness to ensure there is a consequence for violating the laws of the United States.”

According to CBP, upon receiving information about a suspicious vessel heading east towards the island’s west coast, a Mayaguez Coastal Interceptor vessel crew located a white Cape Horn center console vessel near Desecheo with two occupants onboard.

After escorting the vessel to the Mayaguez Boat house for an inspection, Marine Interdiction Agents discovered a hidden compartment containing 350 brick-shaped packages. A field test revealed the white powdery substance inside the bricks was consistent with the properties of cocaine.

The Drug Enforcement Administration has assumed custody of the individuals and the contraband for further investigation and prosecution.

“These individuals pose the greatest threat to the safety and health of our citizens”, stated DEA’s Caribbean Division Special Agent in Charge Denise Foster. “We will continue to allocate all our law enforcement resources to make a greater impact in vulnerable areas where criminal organizations dedicated to drug trafficking are causing greater damage.”

In Fiscal Year 2023, AMO's actions have led to 1,004 arrests, 89,909 apprehensions of undocumented individuals, and the seizure or disruption of substantial amounts of illegal substances and weapons, as well as monetary assets totaling \$15.3 million.

AMO said its mission is to safeguard the nation using its aviation and maritime law enforcement expertise. With approximately 1,800 federal agents, 240 aircraft, and 300 marine vessels, AMO operates extensively within the United States, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.