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CBP Agents Apprehend 11 Illegal Immigrants Near St. Thomas After Vessel Malfunction

Individuals from Romania, Brazil, and the Dominican Republic were intercepted by Border Patrol agents en route to Puerto Rico

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U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents apprehended 11 illegal immigrants on Sunday as they attempted to travel from St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands, to Culebra, Puerto Rico. The group, comprised of individuals from Romania, Brazil, and the Dominican Republic, was intercepted by Border Patrol and Marine Interdiction agents after their private vessel encountered mechanical difficulties near Botany Bay, St. Thomas.

Acting Chief Patrol Agent for the Ramey Border Patrol Sector, Reggie Johnson, mentioned the importance of addressing smuggling operations in the region. "Smuggling organizations exploit diverse routes and methods to introduce people or contraband throughout Puerto Rico and the U.S.

Virgin Islands," Johnson said. "We have the collective resolve to address illicit flows and protect our communities by collaborating with local and federal partners."

The incident occurred on October 13 when agents on patrol spotted the vessel experiencing trouble and requesting assistance. Upon inspection, agents found 11 individuals aboard the vessel who were unable to provide documentation proving authorized presence in the United States. The group included two women and two men from Romania, two men from Brazil, and five men from the Dominican Republic.

The agents transported the non-citizens to the U.S. Border Patrol/ERO co-location facility at Crown Mountain for processing and removal. CBP emphasized that its agents continue to monitor changes in migration patterns, particularly irregular migration, and work closely with federal and international partners to combat human smuggling.

The Ramey Border Patrol Sector, responsible for this operation, is the only sector located outside the continental U.S. and covers the U.S. territories of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. Its jurisdiction includes approximately 6,000 square miles of land and water, encompassing the coastline and a 12-mile territorial water boundary around the islands.

For those wishing to report suspicious activities or provide anonymous tips, CBP encourages contacting their hotline at 1(800)981-1313.