

The Virgin Islands Consortium

54 Migrants Returned To Haiti By Coast Guard

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ST. THOMAS -- The U.S. Coast Guard has returned 54 migrants to Haiti after intercepting the vessel that was attempting to smuggle them into St. Thomas last week, a press release issued on Tuesday by the Coast Guard's [7th District arm](#) made known.

The overcrowded ship was intercepted off the coast of St. John carrying men, women and children. The Coast Guard gave the migrants food, water and medical care before returning them to Haiti.

"This smuggling attempt unnecessarily put lives at great risk, including the lives of young children," said Cmdr. Timothy Cronin, Coast Guard 7th District deputy chief of enforcement. "There have been no changes to U.S. immigration laws and the Coast

Guard, along with its interagency partners, will seek to prosecute smugglers to the fullest extent of the law and promptly return illegal migrants to their respective country of origin."



A crewmember aboard the Coast Guard Cutter Valiant lowers a child to a boatcrew during a repatriation off the coast of Haiti, June 16, 2015. Fifty-four Haitian migrants were

interdicted south of St. John, Virgin Islands, aboard an overloaded sailing vessel on June 10. U.S. Coast Guard photo.



Fifty-four Haitian migrants sit aboard a Haitian Coast Guard vessel during a repatriation off the coast of Haiti, June 16, 2015. On June 10, a Caribbean Air & Marine Branch

aircraft detected the 54 Haitian migrants aboard a sailing vessel. U.S. Coast Guard photo.



A crewmember aboard the Coast Guard Cutter Valiant lowers a Haitian child to a boatcrew during a repatriation off the Coast of Haiti, June 16, 2015. On June 10, 54 Haitian migrants were interdicted off the coast of St. John, Virgin Islands aboard an overloaded sailing vessel. U.S. Coast Guard photo.

Kendrick Christopher, 47, a Grenadian national, and Jeard Shillingford, 33, a Dominican national, were arrested June 11, 2015 in connection with the smuggling attempt, charging the two men with encouraging and inducing aliens to enter the United States in violation of law, United States Attorney Ronald W. Sharpe announced today.

At the conclusion of their detention hearing on June 12, 2015, U.S. Magistrate Judge Ruth Miller remanded both men to the custody of the United States Marshals Service pending further proceedings.

If convicted of encouraging and inducing aliens to enter the United States illegally, Christopher and Shillingford face a maximum sentence of not more than five years in prison. If the offense was done for the purpose of private financial gain, the sentence is not more than 10 years in prison.

Since Oct. 1, the Coast Guard 7th District estimates that 2,231 Haitians, 2,700 Cubans and 468 Dominicans have attempted to illegally migrate via the sea. These numbers represent the total amount of at-sea interdictions, landings and disruptions in the Florida Straits, the Caribbean and Atlantic.

Feature Image: Fifty-four Haitian migrants sit aboard a Haitian Coast Guard vessel during a repatriation off the coast of Haiti, June 16, 2015. On June 10, a Caribbean Air & Marine Branch aircraft detected the 54 Haitian migrants aboard a sailing vessel.

Image Credit: U.S. Coast Guard.