

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Coast Guard for USVI and PR Comes to Rescue of Danish Vessel Distressed in Caribbean Sea

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Coast Guard air and surface units assisted a distressed sailing vessel Feb. 22, 2021 that was taking on water with eight people onboard in the Caribbean Sea, approximately 80 nautical miles south of Santa Isabel, Puerto Rico. By. US COAST GUARD

U.S. Coast Guard 7th District for Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands air and surface units assisted a distressed sailing vessel Monday that was taking on water with eight people onboard in the Caribbean Sea, approximately 80 nautical miles south of Santa Isabel, Puerto Rico.

According to the release, the Zoma, a 46-foot Danish flagged sailing vessel, and all its passengers, five Danish and three French nationals, including two minors, made it to safe harbor Monday morning in Ponce, Puerto Rico under the escort of Coast Guard Cutter Joseph Tezanos.

"I have the utmost pride in my crew's performance and enthusiasm throughout this case," said Lt. Anthony Orr, Coast Guard Cutter Joseph Tezanos commanding officer.

"Throughout the challenging weather, the crew worked tirelessly throughout the night to control flooding aboard the sailing vessel Zoma, make her seaworthy and escort her to the best safe haven. The success of this case was only possible through the impeccable teamwork between the Joseph Tezanos, Sector San Juan's Command Center and Air Station Borinquen. Despite being put to the test, there are few greater rewards in our profession than rescuing the lives of those eight mariners in harm's way."

Coast Guard watchstanders in Sector San Juan received a distress VHF-FM radio communication from the vessel Zoma at 9:53 a.m. Monday transmitted on Channel 16. The master of the Zoma reported the vessel was taking on water at a rate of 10 gallons per minute, the Coast Guard said.

Coast Guard watchstanders directed the launch of a MH-65 Dolphin helicopter from Air Station Borinquen and diverted the cutter Joseph Tezanos to rendezvous with the vessel Zoma and provide rescue assistance. Watchstanders also transmitted an Emergency Group Calling communication to nearby vessel traffic capable of assisting. The Liberian-flagged tank ship Horizon Theano responded to the calling and escorted the sailing vessel Zoma while Coast Guard units arrived on scene.

Upon rendezvous with the vessel Zoma, the Coast Guard helicopter crew lowered their rescue swimmer and a dewatering pump to the sailing vessel. The rescue swimmer initiated pumping operations and worked with the vessel master, using rigid life jackets to inflatable paddleboards, to help contain the flooding.

Shortly thereafter, the cutter Joseph Tezanos arrived and with the assistance of the cutter's small boat transferred the cutter's damage control team and an additional dewatering pump aboard the Zoma. As dewatering efforts continued, the Joseph Tezanos crew embarked four passengers from the sailing vessel, including the two minors, stated the Coast Guard. Cutter Joseph Tezanos' damage control team worked on patching up a one by two-foot hole on the Zoma's starboard side reportedly caused by the vessel's anchor. The accomplished patchwork and dewatering efforts by the Joseph Tezanos and Zoma crews helped stabilize the sailing vessel.

The cutter Joseph Tezanos safely escorted the vessel Zoma to the Club Nautico in Ponce, Puerto Rico Tuesday morning, where Customs and Border Protection Officers assisted the survivors with humanitarian entry into the United States for the vessel to complete repairs.