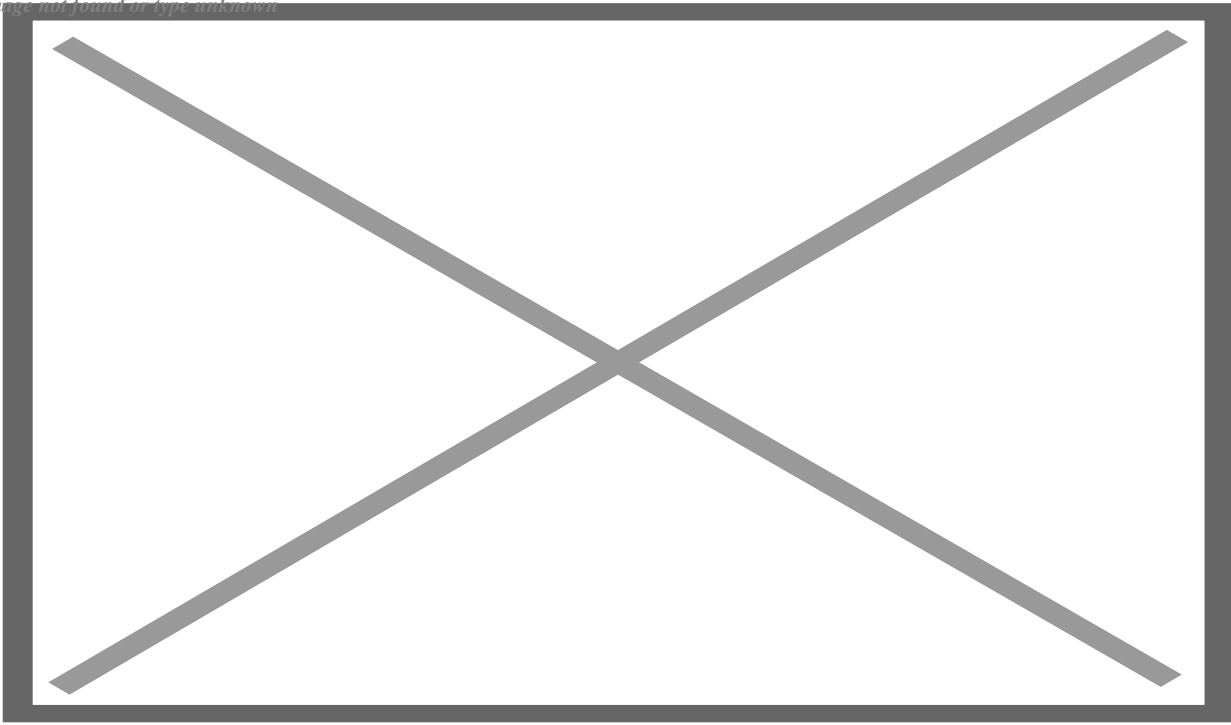


Search for Puerto Rican shipwreck victims suspended

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The U.S. Coast Guard suspended the search and rescue efforts for possible survivors of the shipwreck that occurred in Puerto Rican waters last Thursday at 10:00 a.m. (local time).

San Juan, May 16 (RHC)-- The U.S. Coast Guard suspended the search and rescue efforts for possible survivors of the shipwreck that occurred in Puerto Rican waters last Thursday at 10:00 a.m. (local time).

Due to the shipwreck eleven people died whose nationalities are yet to be determined, while 36 Haitians and two Dominicans were rescued. "Rescue teams involved in the search conducted 20 aerial and 10 surface searches, covering more than 5,194 square nautical miles, an area larger than Puerto Rico," states the official U.S. Coast Guard report.

Rescue efforts persisted for four days with assistance also from Air and Marine Customs and Border Protection and the Puerto Rico Rapid Action Police.

Coast Guard Sector San Juan commandant Capt. Gregory H. Magee offered condolences "to the families, friends and loved ones of those who did not survive or are still missing."

"The dangers of these voyages are real, we see them every day, people aboard extremely overloaded makeshift boats taking to sea on the high seas with little or no life-saving equipment," the statement warned.

According to the testimony of some survivors, the boat was carrying between 60 and 70 passengers, but this figure was not officially confirmed. The boat came from the Dominican Republic and capsized 10 nautical miles north of the uninhabited Puerto Rican island of Desecheo.

This is one of the many rafts intervened in the Mona Channel, a maritime zone that separates the Dominican Republic from Puerto Rico and serves as a regular migration route.

The migratory flow in this area has increased due to the fact that most people want to reach the United States, but want to avoid the dangers of the route through Mexico. Between October and March, the Coast Guard has reported more than 1,300 immigration interceptions in this Caribbean area.

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