

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

U. S. Coast Guard

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Crew of Coast Guard cutter seizes \$60,000 from suspected smuggling vessel

The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter *Tahoma*, a 270-foot medium endurance cutter homeported in Portsmouth, N.H., recently interdicted a vessel that resulted in the seizure of over \$60,000 dollars in cash. The exact source of the money is still being determined, but it was found in a hidden compartment between the vessel's fuel tank and hull.

Watchstanders at Coast Guard Group Key West, Fla., received notification from a local commercial salvage company that a 40-ft pleasure craft was disabled 70 miles south of Islamorada, Fla. The crew of the *Tahoma* was diverted to assess the state of the disabled vessel and provide assistance. The vessel was found anchored near Elbow Cay, Bahamas, and in no apparent distress.

While determining the vessel's condition, the *Tahoma's* boarding team noticed the vessel was configured for smuggling and was granted permission by the Bahamian government to conduct a law enforcement boarding on their behalf. The boarding team discovered six packages of U.S. currency wrapped in cellophane and duct tape, each containing \$10,000.

The three crewmembers (resident aliens from Cuba) were taken to Coast Guard Station Islamorada where they were transferred, along with the \$60,000, to Department of Homeland Security Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents for processing.

ICE agents are currently investigating where the money came from and why it was concealed on board the vessel.

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