

Nearly 3 dozen migrants may have clung to submerged boat for days before rescue off Keys

Charter captain spotted sinking boat; 34 migrants rescued



KEY COLONY BEACH, Fla. – U.S. Coast Guard crews rescued 34 migrants from the water after their vessel sunk in the Florida Keys Friday morning, the agency confirmed.

The migrants may have been clinging to the sinking vessel for up to two days.

According to the agency, a good Samaritan reported the sinking boat about eight miles south of Key Colony Beach.

The owner of Main Attraction Sportfishing Charters said Captain Marty Lewis was approximately ten miles offshore when he spotted the migrants clinging to the sinking boat and called authorities. Lewis stayed on scene until the U.S. Coast Guard arrived.

"About 10 miles offshore I noticed something in the water," Lewis said. "I thought it was like a tree or something."



But it wasn't. What he then thought might be fish in the water actually turned out to be people.

"At least they all stayed on the boat and hung on to what was left," Lewis said. "I mean, 90% of the boat was submerged."

Video shows the Marathon-based crew arriving on scene and hoisting the migrants to safety.

"A lot of people don't go offshore this time of year," Lewis said. "So if we wouldn't have went by them, they may have never been found."



Officials said all people were accounted for.

It's believed the migrants are from Cuba. They were treated and then put on a cutter and will likely be repatriated back to the island.

#HappenedToday @USCG crews rescued 34 migrants from a sinking vessel approx. 8 miles S of #KeyColonyBeach, #Florida, reported a good Sam. They were transferred to a Coast Guard cutter where they will be provided food, water & basic medical attention before being repatriated.
pic.twitter.com/xTEOO8i08z
— USCGSoutheast (@USCGSoutheast) November 10, 2023

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:



Janine Stanwood

Janine Stanwood joined Local 10 News in February 2004 as an assignment editor. She is now a general assignment reporter. Before moving to South Florida from her Washington home, Janine was the senior legislative correspondent for a United States senator on Capitol Hill.