



ICE Arrests Captain in New York Boat Crash That Killed Mother and Baby

Hernandez-Umana faces two counts of misconduct and neglect of a ship officer resulting in death, each punishable by up to 10 years in prison.

A captain accused of running an overcrowded, unlicensed New York Harbor tour that ended with a mother and her 5-month-old daughter dead is now in federal immigration custody, authorities said.

Manuel Ernesto Hernandez-Umana, 46, an El Salvadoran national, was detained by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) after posting bail in a separate federal criminal case tied to the Aug. 8 New York Harbor accident that killed an infant and her mother, according to the Department of Homeland Security ([DHS](#)). He is currently held at an ICE facility in Elizabeth, New Jersey.

Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin said Hernandez-Umana entered the United States through Texas in 2007 by falsely telling a border officer he was an American citizen. "This criminal illegal alien was illegally and recklessly conducting unlicensed boat tours in New York Harbor when his boat capsized, killing a 27-year-old woman and her 5-month-old baby," Mullin said in a press release. He added that Hernandez-Umana would be deported once his criminal proceedings conclude.

The Coast Guard Investigative Service determined that Hernandez-Umana lacked a Merchant Mariner Credential and had no valid Certificate of Inspection for the vessel, a Yamaha AR210 that was ineligible for that type of paid tour operation altogether, according to the U.S. [Attorney's Office](#) for the Southern District of New York. He had 14 passengers aboard a boat rated for a maximum of 10, and the tour, which began around 7 p.m., capsized during a U-turn in rough water more than three hours later.

Among the passengers thrown into the harbor were 5-month-old Antonella Garcia and 27-year-old Sara Sanchez, who drowned after being pulled from the water; both were pronounced dead at a Brooklyn hospital. The boat carried no infant-sized life vests, so Hernandez-Umana had told Sanchez to wear a flotation device herself while holding her daughter for the entire trip, a setup that violated federal safety rules. Eleven other passengers and Hernandez-Umana survived after being rescued by NYPD, Coast Guard, and New York City Fire Department crews.

Misconduct and Neglect Charges

Hernandez-Umana faces two counts of misconduct and neglect of a ship officer resulting in death, each punishable by up to 10 years in prison.

U.S. Attorney Jamie McDonald said, "The defendant allegedly flouted those regulations when he transported paying customers on a commercial vessel without appropriate licenses, overcrowded the vessel, and took on a five-month-old infant passenger, with no infant life vests onboard. We mourn the tragic

drowning deaths of the infant and her mother and urge would-be tour operators and the public to observe all safety protocols for commercial vessels.”

NYPD Commissioner Jessica S. Tisch said Hernandez-Umana "showed a complete disregard for the safety of his passengers when he piloted an over-capacity boat without a license that capsized in the New York Harbor.”

The excursion had been booked through Zeus Luxury Rental Inc., a company that markets its charters on Instagram and TikTok and whose chartered boat previously caught fire during a Long Island Sound cruise in 2025. Hernandez-Umana told investigators he had freelanced for the company since the previous year, initially as a limousine driver, and that he used a friend's boat on the day of the crash because his own boat needed repairs.

Hernandez-Umana, who had been living in Manville, New Jersey, made his first court appearance on Aug. 10 still dressed in the T-shirt, swim trunks, and water shoes he wore during the capsizing, and was not asked to enter a plea. He is scheduled to return to court on Sept. 9.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.