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Haitian National With V.I. Driver's License and Work Authorization Arrested For Illegal Entry Into U.S.

Lael Pierre was arrested at CEKA while attempting to fly to Orlando after CBP officers found he lacked legal U.S. entry documents.

Federal / **Published On March 21, 2025 05:19 AM /**

Staff Consortium **March 21, 2025**

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Last updated at 11:25 a.m. on Friday, March 21, 2025.

ST. THOMAS — Another foreign national who entered the United States illegally was arrested at the airport after trying to board a flight to the mainland.

On Wednesday, Lael Pierre arrived at the Cyril E. King Airport for his flight from St. Thomas to Orlando, Florida. Pierre was taken by Customs and Border Patrol officers to the secondary inspection point, where he reportedly provided his travel history.

According to documents before the court, Pierre said he left his home country of Haiti in August 2022 for St. Maarten. From there, he made his way to Tortola, BVI, and then took a boat to St. John. Pierre reportedly admitted to paying for the trip across to St. John, but forgot how much the journey cost.

CBP officers stated that Pierre possessed a Virgin Islands driver's license and an employment authorization document but lacked a passport, U.S. visa, or any documentation granting legal entry into the country. Work authorization documents are issued through the U.S. immigration system and are often tied to programs like asylum. Individuals granted work authorization typically receive a Social Security number, which allows them to obtain a standard driver's license. While it is unclear whether this individual received a driver's license through [the local program for undocumented immigrants](#), his work authorization may have been granted under federal provisions—such as those that were previously extended to Haitian nationals.

Pierre was therefore arrested and charged with illegally entering the country.

He appeared before U.S. Magistrate Alan Teague on Thursday, who granted him pretrial release upon the signing of a \$5,000 unsecured appearance bond. Pierre was required to report to the probation office for pretrial supervision.