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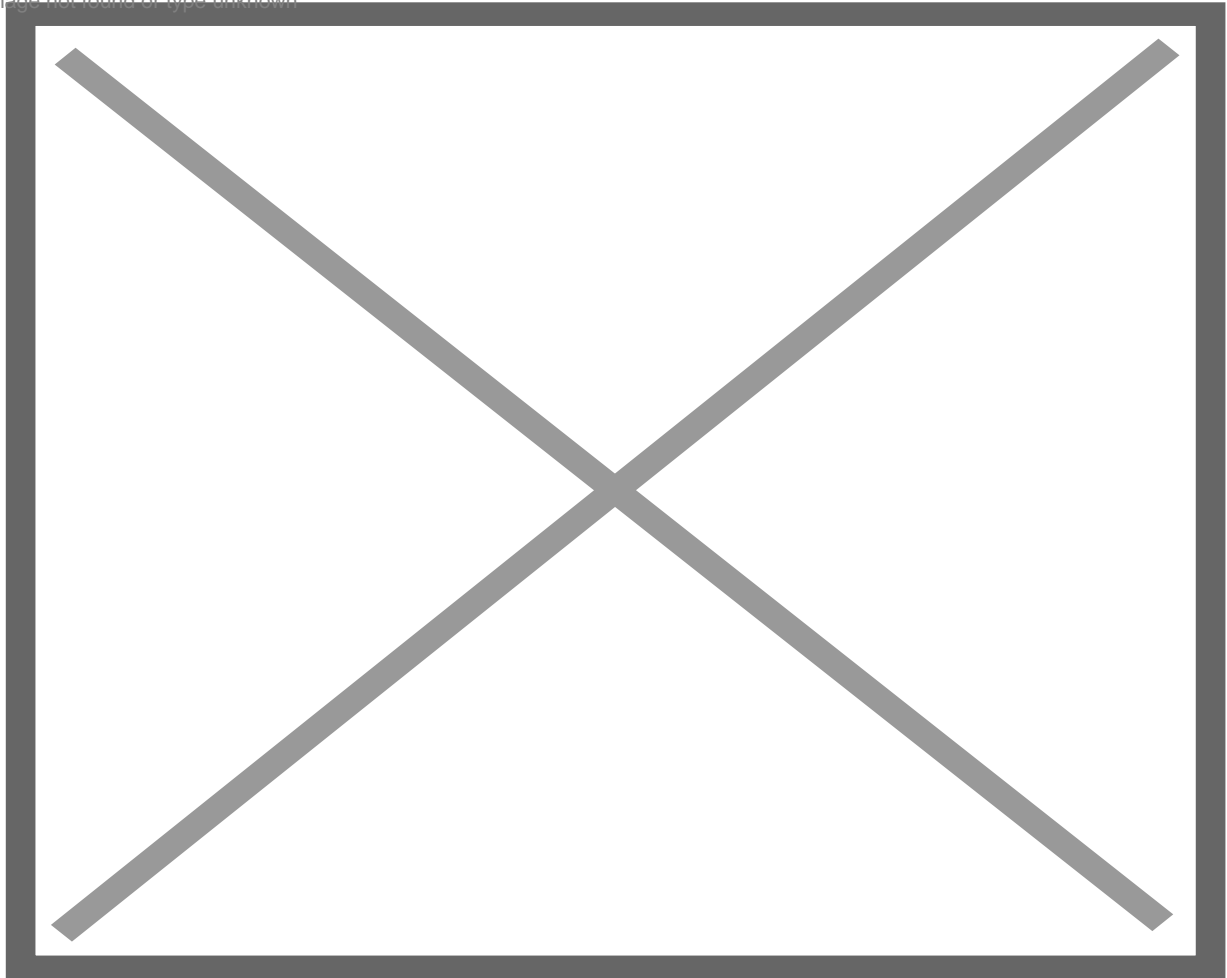
# Puerto Rican Men Sentenced for Smuggling Over \$1.6 Million in Cash Into St. Thomas

**Smugglers flee on foot, leaving behind large sum of money**

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ST. THOMAS — U.S. Attorney for the USVI Delia L. Smith announced Thursday that two men from Puerto Rico, Jesus Lebron Pinto and Geraldo Morales, both aged 29, have been sentenced to 12 months and one day in prison.

This sentencing, handed down by Chief District Judge Robert A. Molloy, comes after their convictions for conspiracy to conceal more than \$100,000.00 on a vessel outfitted for smuggling.

According to court documents, the case dates back to April 7, 2021, when officers from the United States Customs and Border Protection Air and Marine were conducting border security patrols near Stumpy Beach on the west end of St. Thomas. The officers observed suspicious activity,

including a wake in the ocean and the sound of a boat engine approaching the beach. Concurrently, they noticed a silver Ford Explorer with dark tinted windows in the vicinity.

Upon approaching the vehicle, the driver, later identified as one of the accused, fled on foot, leaving behind three large, wet black bags in the trunk. These bags were found to contain approximately \$1.68 million in U.S. currency. The money was subsequently administratively forfeited. Pinto and Morales were apprehended after they jumped from the vessel involved in this smuggling attempt.

This case was a collaborative effort involving Customs and Border Protection Air and Marine Operations, Homeland Security Investigations, and the Drug Enforcement Administration. Assistant United States Attorneys Everard Potter and Adam Sleeper led the prosecution.

The case is part of a broader initiative by the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF). The OCDETF program aims to identify, disrupt, and dismantle high-level drug traffickers, money launderers, gangs, and transnational criminal organizations that pose a threat to the United States.

This is achieved through a prosecutor-led, intelligence-driven, multi-agency approach, leveraging the collective strengths of federal, state, and local law enforcement against criminal networks.