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Man Sentenced to 70 Months for Cocaine Conspiracy Following Coast Guard Interception

Rafael Martinez, along with three others, was convicted after a 2021 U.S. Coast Guard operation intercepted vessels off the Dominican Republic, seizing 444 kilograms of cocaine

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ST. THOMAS — United States Attorney Delia L. Smith announced today that Rafael Martinez, 31, of the Dominican Republic, was sentenced by Chief District Judge Robert A. Molloy to 70 months incarceration following his conviction on conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute cocaine on a vessel subject to the jurisdiction of the United States charges.

According to court documents, on August 30, 2021, a United States Coast Guard Cutter intercepted two go-fast vessels traveling in international waters off the coast of the Dominican Republic. Onboard the vessels were Martinez, Carlos De La Rosa, Elvis Manuel Rodriguez, and

Alexis Sanchez-Garcia. As the Coast Guard Cutter approached the vessels, the occupants were observed throwing bales of cocaine into the ocean. From one vessel, the Coast Guard seized 444 kilograms of cocaine wrapped in white burlap sacks but attempts to recover the bales that were thrown overboard from the second vessel were unsuccessful.

On July 2, 2024, Chief Judge Molloy sentenced De La Rosa, Rodriguez, and Sanchez-Garcia to 70 months incarceration on their cocaine conspiracy convictions.

The case was investigated by the United States Coast Guard and Drug Enforcement Administration and was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Everard E. Potter.

This effort is part of an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) operation. OCDETF identifies, disrupts, and dismantles the highest-level criminal organizations that threaten the United States using a prosecutor-led, intelligence-driven, multi-agency approach. Additional information about the OCDETF Program can be found at <https://www.justice.gov/OCDETF>.

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