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Late-Night Smuggling Operation Halted as CBP Agents Shoot Boat Engine in Tense Interception

Suspect ignored warnings, forcing agents to fire; three arrested after vessel stopped in USVI waters

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CBP vessel. By. ALAMY

Customs and Border Protection agents intercepted a late-night smuggling attempt on Wednesday, as they tracked a vessel without lights heading towards Leinster Bay, St. John, from Tortola.

The agents, stationed for marine interdiction, observed the boat passed between Little Thatch Cay and Frenchman Cay in Tortola, crossed the international border into U.S. waters and eventually pull into the bay with at least three individuals on board. What followed was a tense pursuit, culminating in gunfire and the arrest of the boat's occupants, revealing a suspected alien

smuggling operation.

As the boat continued its journey, CBP agents on St. John watched it pull into Leinster Bay in Annaberg, reportedly with at least three people on board.

Two of them disembarked and began walking up a trail from the beach. CBP agents apprehended them as they made their way up the trail, while additional agents on the water maneuvered closer to the suspicious boat.

When the unlit boat began leaving the Bay, heading back towards Tortola, the CBP agents on the water turned on their lights and sirens to initiate a stop. The captain of the suspect boat looked back, but ignored the agents' commands to heave to, and also ignored two warning flares that were fired. As he continued to flee back to BVI waters, agents resorted to firing upon the vessel's engine, ultimately disabling it and forcing it to a stop.

The boat, which turned out to be a 12-foot dinghy with one 25hp Yamaha engine, was then towed to St. Thomas, where records checks were conducted on the three occupants. The two individuals that came off the boat onto shore in Leinster Bay were two nationals of the Dominican Republic, identified by authorities only by their initials – A.S.C.R and F.J.N.B. There were no indications that these individuals had ever entered the United States legally, agents reported. Meanwhile, the captain of the suspect vessel was identified as Danny Dennevil.?

Dennevil's nationality was not identified in court documents, however he is said to have told agents that he was currently awaiting trial in the BVI for assisting persons with illegal entry. He had been arrested in Tortola in November 2021, and had spent a year in jail on remand before being released. Conditions of bail include reporting to a police station in Tortola every Wednesday, agents learned.

Dennevil told the agents that he knew he was doing something illegal by transporting the two individuals from Tortola to St. John. The woman, Dennevil said, was a girlfriend whom he had met in a strip club. Unaware of her name, he referred to her only as "Blondie". The man that accompanied her was Blondie's cousin, CBP agents were told. Dennevil told agents that he didn't ask for money for the trip, but hoped instead to receive sexual favors from Blondie as payment.

However, the woman said that she offered Dennevil \$1000 for his efforts prior to boarding the dinghy in Tortola, which he accepted. Meanwhile, the man told agents that he had paid a total of \$5,150 to be smuggled from the Dominican Republic to St. Thomas, via Tortola.

Dennevil was charged with alien smuggling and failure to heave to. A court hearing has been scheduled for October 1, before United States Magistrate Alan Teague.