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Deported Immigrants Intercepted Two Days in a Row at St. Thomas Airport, Now Facing Felony Charges

Two men intercepted in consecutive days at Cyril E. King Airport, charged with illegal reentry after recent deportations to Ecuador and Colombia.

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Aerial shot of the Cyril E. King Airport. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM

ST. THOMAS — Two men deported from the United States earlier this year were arrested at the Cyril E. King Airport two days in a row. They now face felony charges in district court.

According to court documents, first, Customs and Border protection officials intercepted Carlos Adrian Verdugo-Castro during primary inspection on October 27, ahead of his United Airlines flight from St. Thomas to Newark, New Jersey.

After he was escorted to the secondary inspection area, Verdugo reportedly told officials that he had been deported from the U.S. on May 30, and repatriated to his home county of Ecuador. He reportedly left again on September 22, heading first to Panama and then Sint Maarten.

From Sint Maarten, Verdugo told authorities he boarded a boat with other illegal immigrants and headed to St. John. For the trip, he says he paid \$2000 to help with the purchase of the boat.

Official records confirmed Verdugo's nationality, and also confirmed that he had been deported from the United States. The most recent stamp on his passport showed his entry into Sint Maarten, and no evidence could be found that he had permission to re-enter the United States.

The following day, October 28, a Colombian man – Robert Tulio Ceron-Fajardo – was apprehended at the CEKA when he tried to board a Frontier Airlines flight to San Juan. His final destination would also have been Newark. Ceron was escorted to the secondary inspection area by Customs and Border Protection agents, where he too reportedly admitted that he had been deported from the United States. In his case, he was apprehended in El Paso, Texas on April 11, and was sent back to his home country on April 17.

Ceron said that he entered St. John by boat on October 9, coming from Sint Maarten like Verdugo before him. He paid \$2,700 to his smuggler to help him cross the border. Officials noted an entry stamp in his Colombian passport, indicating that he came to St. Maarten on September 29. Again, like Verdugo, no evidence could be found that Mr. Ceron, after having been deported earlier this year, had obtained permission to re-enter the country.

Both men now stand charged with reentry after deportation, a felony offense. A detention hearing for Verdugo was held on October 29 before U.S. Magistrate Alan Teague. Judge Teague ordered that he be released to a third-party custodian in Minnesota after signing an unsecured appearance bond in the sum of \$5,000. Ceron will appear before the magistrate on October 31 for his detention hearing.