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Ecuadorian Nationals Sentenced to Prison for Massive Cocaine Trafficking Case

A U.S. Coast Guard operation intercepted a stateless vessel in the Eastern Pacific carrying 1,261 kilograms of cocaine. Three men have been sentenced to 78 months in prison under an OCDETF investigation

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ST. THOMAS — Three Ecuadorian nationals have been sentenced to prison for their involvement in a massive cocaine smuggling operation intercepted in international waters.

United States Attorney for the District of the Virgin Islands, Delia L. Smith, announced the sentencing of Mario Montano Camacho, 41, and Juan Ignacio Reyes Delgado, 48, who each received 78 months of incarceration. Earlier this month, Edison Quijije Cuzme, 35, was also

sentenced to 78 months after pleading guilty to the same charges. All three individuals will face deportation after completing their prison terms.

The case stems from an incident on December 22, 2023, when the United States Coast Guard Cutter Resolute, during a routine patrol in the Eastern Pacific, intercepted a go-fast vessel approximately 110 nautical miles west of Ecuador. The vessel, traveling at high speed without a flag or national identification, was deemed stateless after the Ecuadorian government could neither confirm nor deny its nationality.

According to court documents, during the pursuit, occupants aboard the vessel were observed throwing packages into the ocean. After subduing the vessel, the Coast Guard recovered several of these discarded packages, which were later found to contain approximately 1,261 kilograms of cocaine.

The defendants were charged with possession with intent to distribute cocaine while on board a vessel subject to the jurisdiction of the United States. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Yasir Sadat and handled under the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) program, which focuses on dismantling high-level criminal organizations.

This case was investigated by the United States Coast Guard and Drug Enforcement Administration and prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Yasir Sadat. 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>.