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Federal Jury Convicts Man for Smuggling Undocumented Migrants Near St. Thomas

Omaily Sanchez Taveras was found guilty of transporting undocumented migrants by boat near St. Thomas. He faces up to 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine as federal authorities continue their crackdown on human smuggling operations.

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ST. THOMAS — A federal jury has convicted Omaily Sanchez Taveras, 36, of the Dominican Republic, on alien smuggling charges following a two-day trial, according to an announcement by United States Attorney Delia L. Smith. Taveras now faces a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000 for his involvement in the smuggling operation.

According to evidence presented at trial, federal authorities received a tip on October 13, 2024, regarding a suspicious vessel in the Fortuna Bay area of St. Thomas. Reports indicated that the boat appeared to be transporting undocumented individuals. Upon investigation, Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Air and Marine Interdiction agents responded to the area and discovered the vessel stranded near West Cay.

Authorities determined that the boat was carrying four Romanian nationals, four Dominican Republic nationals, and two Brazilian nationals. Investigators found that all ten individuals had paid Taveras to transport them to Culebra, Puerto Rico.

The case was investigated by Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) and Customs and Border Protection Air and Marine Interdiction (CBP AMO). Prosecutors Everard E. Potter and Denise N. George from the United States Attorney's Office for the District of the Virgin Islands led the case against Taveras.

Taveras now awaits sentencing, where he faces up to 10 years in prison and a maximum fine of \$250,000.