

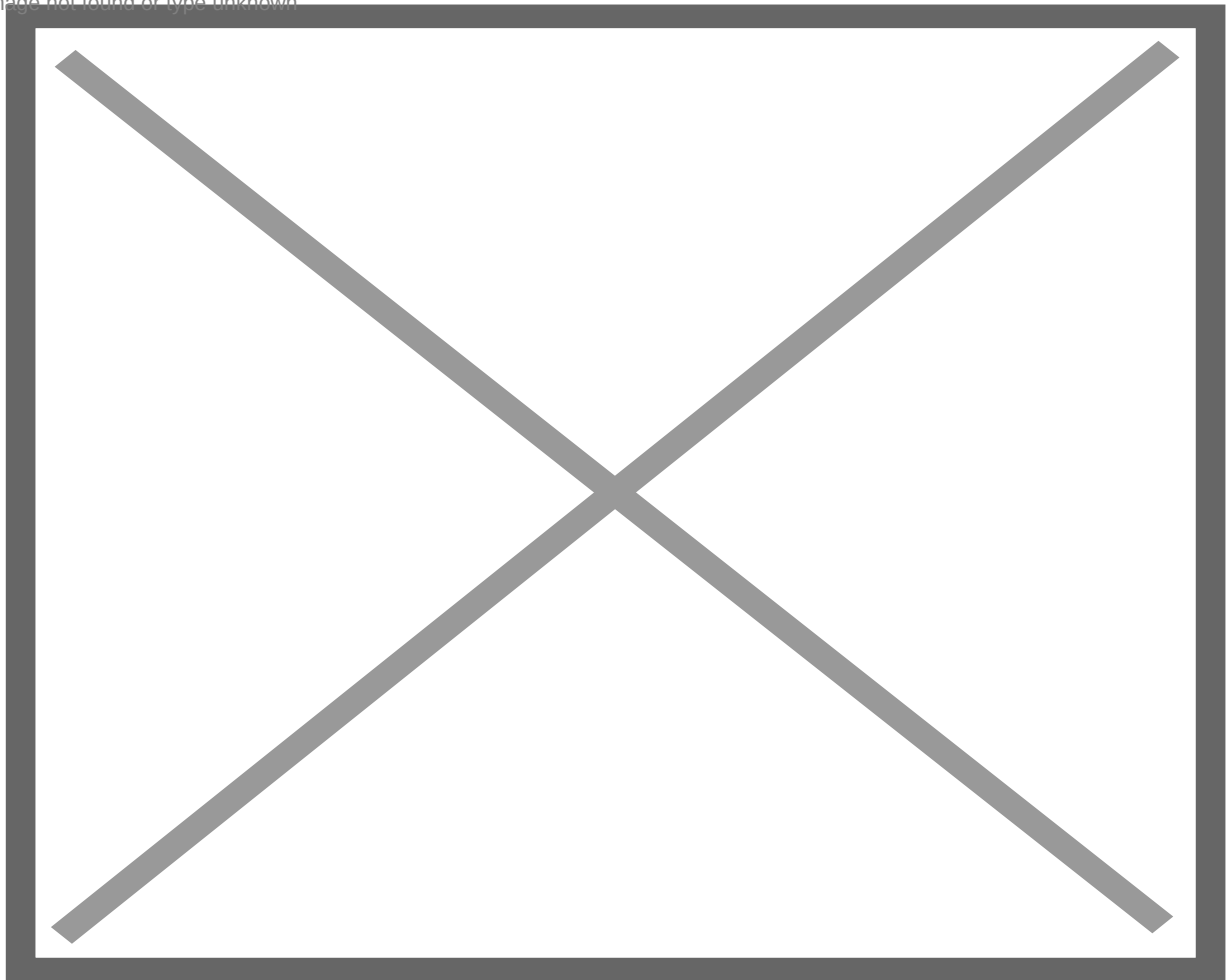
St. Thomas Interdiction Yields 79 Kilos of Cocaine; Smuggler Sentenced to Over 11 Years

The U.S. Coast Guard and Customs and Border Protection foiled a cocaine drop near St. Thomas in 2022. This week, one of the men behind the smuggling attempt was sentenced for possession with intent to distribute.

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ST. THOMAS — A 25-year-old Puerto Rican man has been sentenced to more than 11 years in federal prison following his conviction for cocaine trafficking in a case involving a high-speed boat chase off the coast of St. Thomas.

Brian Santiago Gonzalez was sentenced on July 1, 2025, by Chief District Judge Robert A. Molloy to 137 months of imprisonment, followed by four years of supervised release. Gonzalez

pleaded guilty in December 2024 to one count of possession with intent to distribute cocaine.

According to court records, Gonzalez and co-defendant Wesly Albert Amaro were apprehended on March 29, 2022, after their vessel was spotted traveling without navigation lights at a high rate of speed from Culebra, Puerto Rico toward Hendrick Bay, St. Thomas. At approximately 4:00 a.m., the U.S. Coast Guard detected the suspicious vessel and relayed its location to responding Customs and Border Protection Air and Marine Operations (CBP-AMO) units.

Agents from CBP-AMO located the boat using radar and attempted to stop it. Instead of complying, the vessel fled and its two occupants began jettisoning bags overboard. In response, CBP-AMO agents disabled the boat's engine and marked the areas where the bags were discarded. They later recovered three duffel bags containing a total of 79 kilograms of cocaine.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Kyle Payne and was investigated by CBP-AMO, the Drug Enforcement Administration, and Homeland Security Investigations.

Gonzalez's co-defendant, Wesly Albert Amaro, had already pleaded guilty and was sentenced in August 2022 to 108 months in prison and three years of supervised release.

The prosecution formed part of an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) operation, which targets the most serious drug trafficking and criminal organizations through a multi-agency, prosecutor-led strategy.