

Two Men Face Federal Immigration Charges After ICE Tip Leads to Vehicle Stop in St. Thomas

Authorities said a multi-agency operation intercepted a grey Acura ILX carrying five individuals. Indian national Dhruvkumar Patel and Brazilian national Wanderson Da Silva, previously deported, were later charged in federal court.

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ST. THOMAS – Two people are currently facing federal immigration charges after Immigration and Customs Officials acted on a tip and stopped the vehicle they were traveling in.

According to court documents, federal law enforcement officials received a tip last week about a specific vehicle that was going to be used to transport illegal immigrants. The description of a grey Acura ILX included the last three digits of its license plate as well, which allowed officials to

locate it relatively easily. In a multi-agency operation, the vehicle was followed as it traveled east on Veterans Drive and eventually parked near Total Energies Gas Station. Law enforcement personnel conducted a traffic stop and found the vehicle to contain five individuals, all of whom were taken to the ICE Enforcement Removal Operations office to have their immigration status checked.

Of those five, two have since been charged with immigration violations. Dhruvkumar Patel, a citizen of India, reportedly admitted to entering the United States without proper authorization. He claims to have left Amsterdam on July 25, 2024 by boat, traveling to St. Martin. Patel said that when he got there, he began inquiring about how to get to the U.S., eventually boarding a boat to St. John in October. He reportedly acknowledged not having had legal permission to enter the country.

Patel appeared before U.S. Magistrate Emile Henderson III on Monday, who scheduled a detention hearing for Thursday, with a bench trial to follow on November 3.

Officials also charged Wanderson Da Silva, a Brazilian national who had been previously deported from the United States. He told Homeland Security Investigations agents that he returned recently. On September 2, he flew from Brazil to the Dominican Republic, and 10 days later he arrived in Tortola. The next day, he took a boat from Tortola from St. John and then ferried across to St. Thomas, Da Silva said.

He appeared before U.S. Magistrate Alan Teague on Monday, who scheduled a detention hearing for Tuesday morning. As of press time, it is unclear whether charges will be forthcoming for the other three individuals who were in the car.