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## War Secretary Confirms U.S. Strike on Narco Vessel as Troops Stationed on St. Croix Join Caribbean Buildup

**Four alleged narco-terrorists were killed in waters off Venezuela Friday. The strike comes as thousands of U.S. forces, including soldiers on St. Croix, are deployed across the region in Washington's expanded counter-narcotics mission.**

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**A rocket strike obliterates a narco-trafficking vessel off Venezuela, part of the U.S. military's expanded counter-narcotics mission in the Caribbean.**

U.S. Secretary of War Pete Hegseth announced Friday that American forces carried out a lethal strike against a narcotics-trafficking vessel off the coast of Venezuela, killing four alleged “narco-terrorists.” The move underscores Washington’s escalating military posture in the Caribbean —

one that now directly involves troops stationed on St. Croix.

In a message posted to social media, Hegseth said, “Earlier this morning, on President Trump’s orders, I directed a lethal, kinetic strike on a narco-trafficking vessel affiliated with Designated Terrorist Organizations in the USSOUTHCOM area of responsibility. Four male narco-terrorists aboard the vessel were killed in the strike, and no U.S. forces were harmed.”

The vessel was reportedly carrying “substantial amounts of narcotics” and traveling along a known trafficking corridor in international waters near Venezuela. Hegseth said intelligence left “no doubt” that the boat was part of a network moving drugs to the United States. “These strikes will continue until the attacks on the American people are over,” he vowed.

The announcement follows last month’s deployment of roughly 4,500 U.S. troops across the Caribbean, including forces assigned to Puerto Rico, Trinidad and Tobago, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. On St. Croix, soldiers have been housed at the south shore refinery and terminal facility’s “Man Camp”, as part of the region-wide buildup.

Governor Albert Bryan Jr. has voiced his support for the deployment, citing both security and economic benefits. “If we could stop this flow of drugs to our shores, why wouldn’t we be for that?” he asked in remarks earlier this month, noting that traffickers are increasingly using Caribbean routes as enforcement tightens along the U.S. southern border. Bryan added that hosting several hundred troops on St. Croix also brings a spillover effect: “They gotta eat, drink and make merriment in our community. We are happy to have them.”

The military presence comes amid heightened tensions with Venezuela. Last month, U.S. forces destroyed a vessel in the Caribbean that President Donald Trump described as tied to Venezuelan gangs and narcotics smuggling, killing 11 people on board. In a message posted after that incident, Trump warned traffickers: “Please let this serve as notice to anybody even thinking about bringing drugs into the United States of America. BEWARE!”

Officials say the regional mission is aimed squarely at intercepting narcotics shipments, though observers expect that migrant vessels from Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and other nations will also be encountered. Secretary of State Marco Rubio has described the operation as the opening phase of a broader campaign: “The president of the United States is going to wage war on narco-terrorist organizations.”

With U.S. troops already on the ground in St. Croix, the Virgin Islands has become a frontline hub in that campaign, directly tying the territory’s residents and economy to Washington’s push against the narcotics trade in the Caribbean.