

Romanian National Sentenced to Time Served in St. Thomas Illegal Re-Entry Case After Two Prior Deportations

Puiu Lacatus, 37, was sentenced after six months and one day in detention after federal agents said he admitted he was Romanian and had no legal status to be in the United States.

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ST. THOMAS — A Romanian national was sentenced to time served Friday after spending six months and one day in detention for illegally entering the United States after previously being removed, according to the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of the Virgin Islands.

U.S. Attorney Adam F. Sleeper announced that Puiu Lacatus, 37, of Romania, was sentenced on June 12, 2026, by Chief U.S. District Court Judge Robert A. Molloy.

According to court documents, Lacatus had been charged with illegal re-entry after having previously been removed from the United States.

The case began on December 11, when Homeland Security Investigations agents received a tip about a group of illegal immigrants staying at a residence in Estate Contant.

HSI agents went to the Contant residence to conduct surveillance and observed Lacatus leave the property and walk toward Nisky Center.

Federal agents announced themselves as “Immigration” and asked Lacatus about his nationality and whether he had legal status to be in the United States. According to the U.S. Attorney’s Office, Lacatus said he was Romanian and did not have legal status to be in the United States.

Agents then conducted additional records checks, which revealed that Lacatus had previously been deported twice.

Authorities also confirmed with the Department of Homeland Security that there was no record showing Lacatus had obtained consent from the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security to return to the United States. They also confirmed that he was a citizen of Romania.

The case was investigated by Homeland Security Investigations with assistance from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

It was prosecuted by Criminal Chief Kyle Payne of the United States Attorney’s Office for the District of the Virgin Islands.