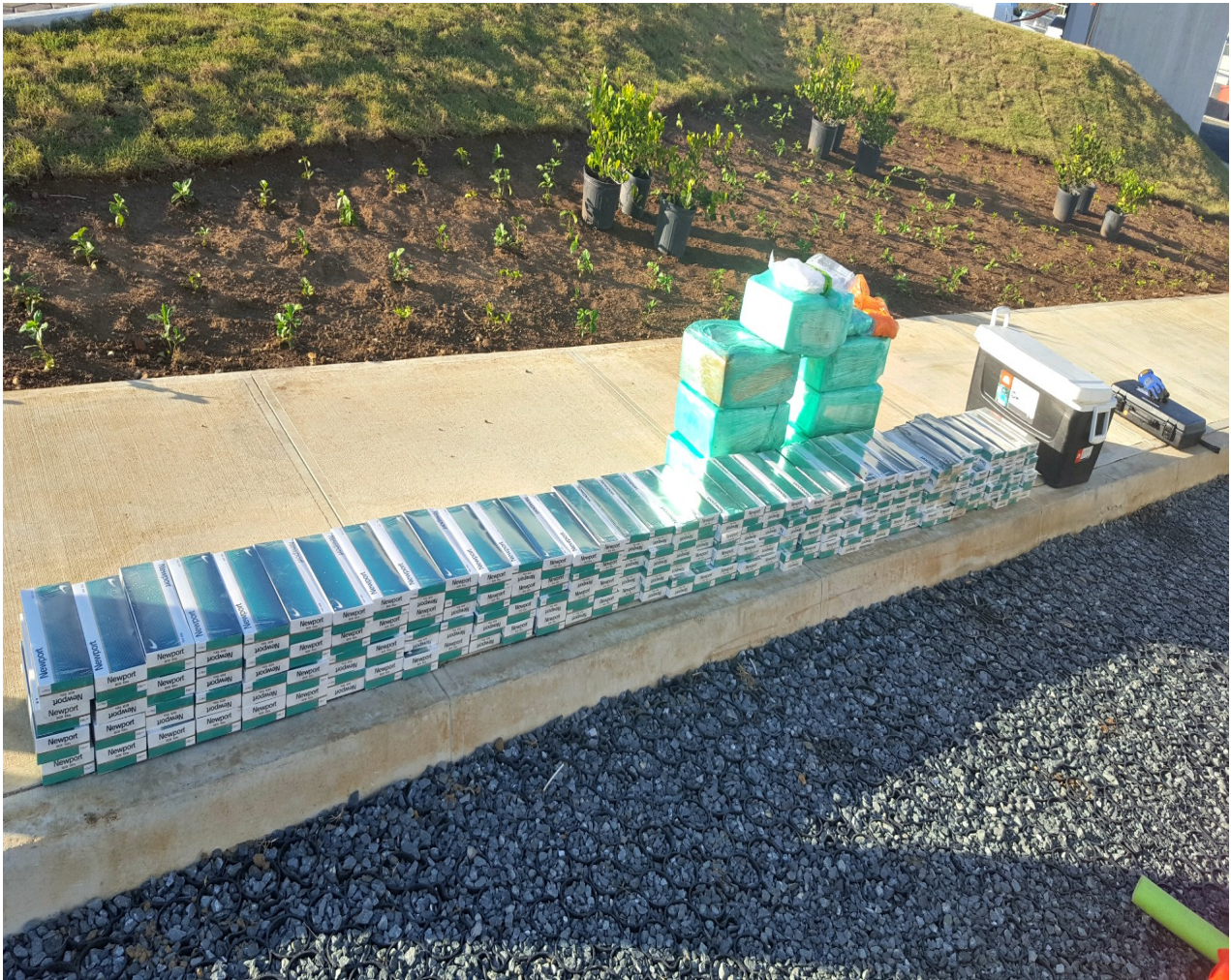


The Virgin Islands Consortium

174 Pounds Of Cocaine Seized By Law Enforcement From Private Vessel In Eastern Puerto Rico

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U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) [Air and Marine Operations \(AMO\)](#) agents and Puerto Rico Police Department (PRPD) officers collaborated Sunday to seize 174 pounds (78.7 kilos) of cocaine and 152 cartons of cigarettes found on board a private vessel that was towed out of the water. The estimated value of the seized narcotics is \$1.9 million.

“This is the second incident in which our AMO crews have detected smuggling attempts through the eastern coast of the island,” said Johnny Morales, Director of Air Operations. “We remain committed to work with other law enforcement partners to detect and deter these intrusions.”

An AMO Fajardo Marine Unit interceptor crew observed a suspect vessel reaching the Las Croabas boat ramp. The Marine Interdiction Agents contacted the Puerto Rico Police Department who conducted a traffic stop of the vessel, tow vehicle, and a cargo van.

The Marine Interdiction Agents and the PRPD officers conducted an extended border search of the vessel, initially finding 152 cartons of cigarettes (totaling 30,400 individual cigarettes) concealed in the port gunnel of the vessel. A PRPD K-9 alerted positive to the presence of narcotics aboard the vessel.

CBP officers performed a more intrusive search, removing the vessel's built-in fuel tank, finding a hidden compartment beneath. Inside they found 72 bricks (totaling 78.7 kilograms) of a white powdery substance that field-tested positive for the properties of cocaine.

Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) assumed custody of 2 US citizens, the 72 bricks of suspected cocaine and the vessel for further investigation. Special Agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) seized the 152 cartons of cigarettes.

On Feb. 14, [AMO crews seized 25 pounds](#) inside a backpack concealed inside the center console of a private vessel arriving at the Las Croabas boat ramp in Fajardo.

AMO is a federal law enforcement organization dedicated to serving and protecting the American people through advanced aeronautical and maritime capabilities. With approximately 1,800 federal agents and mission support personnel, 240 aircraft, and 300 marine vessels operating throughout the United States, Puerto Rico, and U.S. Virgin Islands, AMO conducts its mission in the air and maritime environments at and beyond the border, and within the nation's interior.