

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Ribbon-Cutting Marks Completion Of Construction On CBP San Juan Laboratory

VIC News / **Published On March 12, 2018 10:51 AM /**

Staff **March 12, 2018**



A ribbon-cutting ceremony Wednesday at the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) Federal Center in Guaynabo, Puerto Rico marked completion of construction on a build-out project to relocate the U.S. Customs and Border Protection's (CBP) [San Juan Laboratory](#).

According to CBP, the completed project provides a full-service analytical laboratory equipped with the latest state of the art scientific equipment and capabilities, serving CBP operations in Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands, as well as support for law enforcement partners in the Caribbean.

“The updated lab provides the much-needed improvements to the operational areas for various lab activities by isolating each of those required needs in different, clearly defined areas within the lab,” said Francis “Fritz” Dutch, director of CBP’s Facilities, Management and Engineering Division.

Several distinguished guests attended the Mar. 7 ceremony and participated in the ribbon-cutting, including Eduardo Arosemena, Puerto Rico Deputy Secretary of State; Dr. James D. Sweet, Acting Director of Laboratory & Scientific Services; and [Linda Jacksta](#) CBP’s Deputy Executive Assistant Commissioner, Operations Support.

The U.S. General Services Administration managed the build-out of approximately 13,000 usable square feet of space in the GSA Federal Center according to its mission to deliver value and savings in real estate, acquisition, technology and other mission-support services for the federal government.

“We take great pride in our mission, because it allows our customers like Customs and Border Protection, to focus on their mission to protect the public from dangerous people and materials, said GSA’s Northeast and Caribbean Regional Administrator John A. Sarcone III. “Laboratories like this one are critical to CBP’S mission to help facilitate the free flow of goods into Puerto Rico and provide the safety and security the people of Puerto Rico expect and deserve.”

The San Juan Laboratory facility was previously located at the historic Customs House in Old San Juan. The nearly \$6 million build-out project at the GSA Federal Center began in May 2016 and was completed in February 2018.

“The lab includes exterior upgrades to the façade and electrical service system, as well as construction of administrative spaces and a state of the art laboratory space for microscopy, digital forensics, drug analysis, latent print processing, petroleum analysis, material conditioning, and organic and inorganic analysis. This new space optimizes CBP’s ability to service Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands with this forensic support, Weapons of Mass Destruction interdiction, and trade enforcement,” Dutch said.

Additional features of the new laboratory include:

- Energy efficiency systems including: Energy Star equipment, LED motion sensing lighting systems, new solar water heaters, and a Building Automated System to monitor energy consumption and avoid excess spending due to overuse of electricity.
- Expanded bench and storage space for lab instruments, flammable gases, and liquids
- An updated rooftop air handling unit to accommodate the high volume of airflow that the lab requires for critical equipment
- Expanded conditioning rooms for textile and organic matter testing
- Increased work space for chemists
- A state of the art security system

The services provided by the San Juan Laboratory include forensic support, Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) interdiction, and trade enforcement. Forensic support to CBP Officers, and Border Patrol and ICE Agents includes latent print lifting, crime scene

investigation and evidence collection, analysis of unknowns and suspected controlled substances, photography, audio and video duplication, data extraction from media and cellular phones, and expert witness testimony, among others.

Historically, the laboratory has been an integral part of the customs operation. In 1841, the U.S. Customs Service began hiring pharmacists and medical doctors to analyze [sugar and molasses](#) imported from the Caribbean to make sure that the commodities hadn't been doctored to make high-quality products appear to be inferior to avoid duty payments.