

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Two Venezuelan Nationals Plead Guilty To Possession Of A Controlled Substance On Board Vessel Carrying Multiple Kilos Of Marijuana

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ST. CROIX -- Jesus Garcia, age 35, and Jhoan Gomez, age 28, of Venezuela, both pleaded guilty on Wednesday in District Court to one count of possession of a controlled substance on board a vessel, United States Attorney Gretchen C.F. Shappert announced.

This federal offense carries a possible sentence of up to 40 years in prison, a maximum fine of up to \$5,000,000 dollars, and a term of supervised release of at least 2 years.

Sentencing is set for December 14, 2018.

According to court documents, on May 8, 2017, at approximately 7:50 p.m., a joint inter-agency task force south patrol aircraft located a northbound go-fast vessel (GFV) approximately 105 nautical miles west of Martinique. The vessel was located in a known drug trafficking route. It contained multiple fuel barrels and suspicious packages visible on deck.

The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Donald Horsley was directed to intercept the vessel. Upon arrival, the crew of the GFV were observed tossing the suspicious packages and fuel barrels overboard. Ultimately, the crew of the Cutter Donald Horsley recovered 8 bound packages, which contained approximately 162 kilograms (357 pounds) of marijuana.

The defendants were two of the 7 Venezuelan national crew on board the GFV. Co-defendant Juan Rodriguez [previously entered a guilty plea on August 13, 2018](#). The Coast Guard Cutter Donald Horsley is a 154-foot Fast Response Cutter home-ported in San Juan, Puerto Rico.