

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Final Venezuelan National Pleads Guilty To Possession Of Controlled Substance Aboard Vessel

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ST. CROIX -- Roman Jose Aguilera Gig, 39, of Venezuela, pleaded guilty on Friday in District Court to one count of possession of a controlled substance on board a Vessel, United States Attorney Gretchen C.F. Shappert announced.

The 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 February 27, 2019.

According to court documents, on May 8, 2017, at approximately 3:45 p.m., a patrol aircraft associated with the Joint Inter-Agency Task Force South located a northbound

go-fast vessel (GFV) approximately 105 nautical miles west of Martinique traveling at a speed of 25 knots. The vessel was located in a known drug trafficking route. It had five outboard engines and 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 defendant was one of seven Venezuelan national crew members onboard the GFV.

According to the release, Gig is now the final and seventh defendant to enter a guilty plea. Co-defendant Juan Rodriguez previously entered a guilty plea on August 13, 2018. Co-defendants Jesus Garcia and Jhoan Gomez entered a guilty plea on August 15, 2018. Co-defendants Felix Gomez and Rosauro Morao entered a guilty plea on August 22, 2018. Co-defendant Manual Rodriguez entered a guilty plea on September 20, 2018.

The Coast Guard Cutter Donald Horsley is a 154-foot Fast Response Cutter homeported in San Juan, Puerto Rico, the release said.

The case was investigated by the United States Coast Guard and the Drug Enforcement Administration. It was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Daniel H. Huston.

Feature Image: The Coast Guard Cutter Donald Horsley (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Eric D. Woodall)