

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Dominican Republic And Venezuelan Defendant Plead Guilty To Illegal Entry Charges In Federal Court

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ST. THOMAS -- Juan Lorenzo Matias Peralta, 38, of the Dominican Republic and Dionis Alexander Luis Gomez, 31, of Venezuela, pleaded guilty on Wednesday in Magistrate Court before Magistrate Judge Ruth Miller to illegal entry offenses, United States Attorney Gretchen C.F. Shappert announced. Sentencing is set for December 3, 2018.

According to court documents, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Air and Marine Operations (AMO) apprehended a vessel in the area of North Haulover Bay, St. John after agents observed that the vessel was operating with no lights. After the boat was stopped, AMO agents observed five male individuals onboard, including Peralta and Gomez. Upon further investigation, agents concluded that Peralta and Gmoez were not

U.S. citizens, but were in fact nationals from the Dominican Republic and Venezuela, respectively. Peralta and Gomez did not have permission to enter the United States, and the area where the boat was apprehended, was not a designated port of entry.

Peralta and Gomez face a maximum sentence of six months and a \$5,000 fine.

The case was investigated Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) and U.S. Customs and Border Protection Air and Marine Unit (AMO) and prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Sigrid M. Tejo-Sprotte.