

The Virgin Islands Consortium

St. John Boat Captain Arrested And Charged With Seaman's Manslaughter For Causing Death At Sea

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ST. JOHN -- Richard Smith, 65, of St. John, was arrested today on an indictment charging him with seaman's manslaughter, United States Attorney Gretchen C.F. Shappert announced. Smith made his initial appearance before Magistrate Judge Ruth Miller.

The indictment alleges that on or about October 25, 2015, Smith was the captain and owner of the S/V Cimarron. Through his inattention, negligence and misconduct, Smith allegedly caused the death of David Pontius. According to the indictment, Mr. Pontius was a crewmember aboard the S/V Cimarron when the 43-foot sailing vessel left North Carolina to return to St. John where Smith operates a sailing charter business. During the

course of the return voyage, Mr. Pontius allegedly became disoriented, climbed over the rail of the boat, and jumped overboard. The indictment alleges that Smith failed to stop to render assistance. As a result, Mr. Pontius died.

The case is being investigated by Coast Guard Investigative Service (CGIS) Chesapeake Region, United States Coast Guard – Marine Safety Detachment (MSD) St. Thomas and prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Sigrid M. Tejo-Sprotte.

United States Attorney Shappert reminds the public that an indictment is merely a formal charging document and is not evidence of guilt. Every defendant is presumed innocent until and unless found guilty.