

# The Virgin Islands Consortium

## Remaining Two of Three D.R. Nationals Charged With Trafficking Over 1,000 Kilograms of Cocaine Enter Guilty Pleas

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ST. THOMAS -- Edwin Vargas, 31, and Lennin Cornelio-Perez, 32, both of the Dominican Republic, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to possess a controlled substance on board a vessel subject to the jurisdiction of the United States in District Court before Judge Curtis Gomez, United States Attorney Gretchen C.F. Shappert announced.

According to court documents, a United States Coast Guard (USCG) aircraft detected a go- fast style vessel with no indicia of nationality located about 65 nautical miles north of San Juan, Puerto Rico. After being detected, the go-fast vessel led authorities on a ten-

hour chase in international waters between Puerto Rico and St. Thomas. USCG personnel were able to board the vessel when it finally went dead in the water approximately 96 nautical miles north of St. Thomas. Upon boarding the vessel, authorities discovered Vargas, Cornelio-Perez, and co-defendant Perez- Brito, along with 52 bales containing a total of approximately 1,132 kilograms of a white powdery substance that field tested positive for cocaine.

In pleading guilty, Vargas and Cornelio-Perez both admitted to having conspired to transport the cocaine by boat from Venezuela to Puerto Rico, with Vargas admitting to having been the boat's captain and Cornelio-Perez admitting to having served as the boat's mechanic.

Vargas and Cornelio-Perez face mandatory minimum sentences of ten years' imprisonment, five-year term of supervised release, and a fines of up to \$10,000,000, respectively.

This case is being investigated by the USCG, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Air and Marine Operations (AMO), Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), and the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), and is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Meredith J. Edwards.