

The Virgin Islands Consortium

CBP Agents Seize Nearly \$800K Inside Boat Navigating From Fajardo to St. Thomas

Crime / **Published On September 25, 2019 09:00 AM /**

Staff **September 25, 2019**



U.S. Customs and Border Protection Air and Marine Operations (AMO) agents on Friday seized nearly \$800,000 in undeclared currency found inside a 25-foot vessel that departed Fajardo navigating to St. Thomas.

Jose Ernesto Vazquez Colon and Abnel Belordo Colon made their initial appearances in federal court on Saturday in St. Thomas.

“This is the second incident within one week in which transnational criminal organizations seek to move currency,” stated Johnny Morales, director of AMO for the Caribbean Air and Marine Branch. “AMO has very advanced aeronautical and maritime capabilities to

detect and interdict them throughout our coastal borders.”

Near midnight of Sep. 20, AMO Marine Interdiction agents (MIAs) in St. Thomas received information about a suspicious boat departing the vicinity of Fajardo.

The agents located a 25’ fiberglass center console vessel, with a single outboard engine, operating without navigation lights and moving east toward St. Thomas, with two occupants onboard.

The agents activated the blue lights, and the vessel operator failed to heave, continuing toward St. Thomas, as the other occupant jettisoned bags into the water. Agents marked the location with glow sticks. The agents fired warning shots and the vessel continued making evasive moves. .

The agents disabled the engine, stopping the vessel, and arrested the two occupants.

Multiple packages of cash were recovered from the vessel as well vacuum-sealed bags of cash that were loosely floating in the water.

Special agents with the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations will undertake the investigation and prosecution of this incident, CBP said.

Assistant United States Attorney Nathan Brooks is leading the case. CBP reminded that a complaint is merely a formal charging document and not evidence of guilt.

"Every defendant is presumed innocent until and unless found guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law," CBP said.

On Sep. 17, CBP AMO agents [seized over \\$1.1 million and arrested three men](#) transporting currency from Vieques, Puerto Rico towards St. Thomas, US Virgin Islands.