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CBP Interdicts Vessel From Puerto Rico Heading Toward USVI With \$100,000; Vessel Operator Facing 15 Years in Federal Prison

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ST. THOMAS — Blas Sebastian Panzardi Davila of Puerto Rico, appeared Friday before U.S. Magistrate Judge Ruth Miller for an initial appearance after his arrest on Thursday evening for currency smuggling, United States Attorney Gretchen C.F. Shappert has announced.

According to court records, Customs and Border Protection (CBP) interdicted a vessel traveling from the area of Culebra, Puerto Rico towards St. Thomas at around 9:10 p.m., without lights. Davila captained the vessel with no passengers aboard. CBP boarded the vessel and discovered in excess of \$100,000 in vacuum-sealed plastic bags. The government charged Davila with concealing and conspiring to conceal currency in excess of \$100,000 on board a vessel outfitted for smuggling.

If convicted, Davila faces a maximum sentence of 15 years' incarceration.

This case is being investigated by Homeland Security Investigations (HSI). It is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Everard E. Potter.

United States Attorney Shappert reminds the public that a complaint is merely a formal charging document, and it is not evidence of guilt. Every defendant is presumed innocent until and February 2 unless found guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

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