

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Two Narcotic Smugglers Charged After Being Stopped With 1,355 pounds of Marijuana on Vessel

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ST. THOMAS — Centeno A. Hansel-Andres and Cristian Valencia-Mendoza were charged with conspiracy to possess and possession of a controlled substance with intent to distribute on board a vessel subject to the jurisdiction of the United States, United States Attorney Gretchen C.F. Shappert announced Friday.

The court filings allege that defendants were on board a go-fast style vessel that was intercepted by a United States Coast Guard (USCG) cutter while on routine patrol. The USCG first sighted the go-fast vessel on October 18 at approximately 45 nautical miles north of Malpelo Island, Columbia. The vessel did not have any display indicating its nationality. The USCG boarded the vessel and successfully seized 21 bales of

marijuana, consisting of approximately 1,355 pounds, and arrested the two individuals on board.

This case is being investigated by the United States Coast Guard and the Virgin Islands Drug Enforcement Agency. It is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Adam Sleeper and Donna Rainwater.

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.

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