

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Four Men Arrested for Smuggling and Concealing \$1.28 Million Following Apprehension Near Stumpy Beach on St. Thomas

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ST. THOMAS — United States Attorney Gretchen C.F. Shappert announced Wednesday that charges were filed against four men for smuggling and concealing approximately \$1.28 million dollars. Geraldo Alverio Morales, Jesus Javier Lebron Pinto, and Alcibiades Flis Batista were arrested Wednesday evening, April 7, and made their initial appearances in federal court on April 8, 2021. Joshua Laboy Lozada was arrested on April 8, 2021 and made his initial appearance on April 9, 2021.

The detention hearings for Alcibiades Flis Batista and Joshua Laboy Lozada were held April 13, 2021. Flis Batista was ordered detained. Laboy Lozada was released on bail on home detention and electronic monitoring. Alverio Morales and Lebron Pinto's detention hearings are scheduled for Friday, April 16, 2021.

According to court documents, on April 7, 2021 at approximately 5:00 p.m., Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Air and Marine officers were conducting border security patrols in the Stumpy Beach area, on the west end of St. Thomas, V.I. Stumpy Beach is known by law enforcement officers for its history of contraband smuggling activity. During the patrol, CBP officers observed a silver Ford Explorer passing with dark tinted windows.

CBP officers continued down toward the beach and observed an unknown male emerge from the bushes. The unknown male appeared nervous upon seeing the CBP officers. The CBP officers continued to monitor the subject and observed him talking on his cell phone. CBP officers later observed that the silver Ford Explorer, previously seen along the road, had returned to the beach area. The occupant of the vehicle later approached the unknown male and they began talking to each other. CBP officers continued their surveillance. At approximately 7:05 p.m., CBP officers observed a wake in the ocean and the sound of a boat engine on the beach. They notified other CBP team members that a vessel traveling without navigational lights was approaching Stumpy Beach. After the vessel arrived in the area, the silver Ford Explorer travelled from the beach area towards the main road. CBP officers, who were also located along the rugged road, saw the silver Ford Explorer attempting to leave the Stumpy Beach area. The officers identified themselves by shining their vehicle lights along with the law enforcement blue lights. After seeing the law enforcements lights, the driver, later identified as Alcibiades Flis Batista, suddenly reversed the silver Ford Explorer until it was stuck in the dirt. After the vehicle became stuck, Batista exited the vehicle and ran into the bush.

Officers approached the silver Ford Explorer and observed three large black bags in the trunk of the vehicle. The bags contained approximately \$1.28 million dollars in U.S. currency. The bags were wet, and the currency was wrapped in bundles of vacuum sealed plastic.

Other officers who were at sea, observed that a boat was beached on Stumpy Beach. Additional law enforcement officers assisted with both the search of the occupants of the vessel and the driver of the silver Ford Explorer.

A few hours later, officers located Geraldo Alverio Morales, Jesus Javier Lebron Pinto, and Alcibiades Flis Batista in an area adjacent to Stumpy Beach. The following day, the officers returned to Stumpy Beach and located Joshua Laboy Lozada, who was also taken into custody.

This case is being investigated jointly by the Caribbean Anti-Money Laundering Alliance (CMLA) which promotes interagency collaboration to identify, disrupt, and dismantle money laundering organizations operating throughout the Caribbean Established in 2018, CMLA's partner agencies include Homeland Security Investigations, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Internal Revenue Service, U.S. Postal Inspection Service, U.S. Secret Service, U.S. Marshals, the U.S. Attorney's Offices for the Districts of the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, as well as state and local law enforcement agencies. It is being

prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Juan Albino.

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

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