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Two Plead Guilty after Attempting to Smuggling More Than \$1 Million into St. Thomas

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ST. THOMAS -- United States Attorney Gretchen C.F. Shappert for the District of the Virgin Islands announced that Jose Ernesto Vazquez Colon and Abnel Belordo Colon pleaded guilty to attempting to smuggle over \$1 million into St. Thomas by boat.

According to court documents filed in the case, late in the evening of September 20, CBP Marine Unit agents noticed a boat traveling without navigational lights about three miles north of Savana Island. When CBP attempted to initiate a stop, the two individuals on the boat began throwing bags overboard, and these were later found to contain over \$1 million in cash. After CBP agents disabled the boat's motor they boarded and found, in addition to the two defendants, multiple dumbbells with ropes attached.

According to the affidavit filed in the case, these are often used to ensure that any contraband materials thrown overboard will sink to the bottom, so that they can be picked up later using GPS.

This case is being investigated by the Department of Homeland Security. It is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Adam Sleeper and Nathan Brooks. The defendants will be sentenced at a later date.

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