

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Puerto Ricans Who Tossed Over \$100,000 Into Ocean Arrested in St. Thomas

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ST. THOMAS — U.S. Attorney Gretchen C.F. Shappert announced Tuesday that two men from Vieques, Puerto Rico were arrested on Monday in St. Thomas on criminal charges related to their alleged involvement in concealing or attempting to conceal more than \$100,000 in currency aboard a vessel outfitted for smuggling.

According to court documents, Julius Alvarez-Gonzalez, 31 and Jimmy Garcia-Quinonez, 22 were stopped Monday evening by Customs and Border Protection Air and Marine agents, west of St. Thomas. The two were operating a vessel at night, without navigational lights and headed towards Barents Bay. As agents approached, they observed a large duffel bag being thrown overboard. The bag was later recovered and

contained more than \$100,000.

Both Alvarez-Gonzalez and Garcia-Quinonez are charged with a violation of Title 46 United States Code, Section 70503(a)(3), which makes it a crime to possess more than \$100,000 U.S. currency onboard a vessel outfitted for smuggling. If convicted, they face up to 15 years in prison.

Customs and Border Protection's Air and Marine Operations and Homeland Security Investigations are investigating the case.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Natasha Baker is prosecuting the case.

A criminal complaint is merely an allegation and all defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.