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Three Men Caught at Sea Northwest of St. Thomas Charged With Smuggling 41 Kilos of Cocaine

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ST. THOMAS — U.S. Attorney Gretchen C.F. Shappert announced today that three men were arrested on Sunday in St. Thomas for smuggling 41 kilograms of cocaine.

On Monday, Erickson Bolivar, a Venezuelan national, Keisy Jesus, a Dominican Republican national, and Yehudi Robles, a United States citizen from Puerto Rican living in St. Thomas, had their initial appearances before U.S. District Court Magistrate Judge Ruth Miller on criminal charges related to conspiring to possess with intent to distribute cocaine and possession with intent to distribute cocaine.

According to court documents, on Sunday at approximately 4:37 a.m., Customs and Boarder Protection Air and Marine (AMO) agents and Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) special

agents detected a vessel located off of the northwest coast of St. Thomas. The agents launched their AMO interceptor vessel to investigate. AMO encountered the vessel traveling west toward Puerto Rico under the cover of darkness without any navigation lights. Once the vessel was stopped, agents detained the three men.

The boat and men were transported to Customs and Border Protection (CBP) in Fajardo, Puerto Rico for further investigation. A CBP narcotics detection K-9 alerted to the presence of narcotics on board the vessel. Agents discovered 41 kilograms of cocaine in two separate vessel compartments.

On Tuesday judge Miller ordered Bolivar and De Jesus detained pending resolution of the matter. Robles was released to the custody of a third-party custodian and placed on house arrest pending the resolution of the matter.

All three men are charged with conspiring to possess with intent to distribute a controlled substance and possession with intent to distribute a controlled substance pursuant to 21 U.S.C §§ 841(b)(1)(B) and 846. If convicted, all three men face up to life in prison. A federal district court judge will determine any sentence after considering the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

CBP, AMO and HSI are investigating the case, and the United States Attorney's Office for the District of the Virgin Islands 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.