

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Three Puerto Ricans Facing Life in Prison After Allegedly Being Caught in St. Thomas Waters With 75 Kilogram Packages of Cocaine

Crime / **Published On January 07, 2022 06:08 PM /**

Staff Consortium **January 07, 2022**



Three Puerto Rican men were arrested on December 29, 2021 in St. Thomas on criminal charges related to their alleged possession with intent to distribute cocaine on board a covered vessel.

According to court documents, on December 29 Pedro Juan Ramos-Ramirez, Johny Arias Rodriguez, and Gerald Albert Cruz were on-board a vessel in United States customs waters that was traveling at night without navigation lights. Agents from United States Customs and Border Protection, Air and Marine Operations (“CBP-AMO”)

activated their vessel's blue emergency lights, siren, and navigation lights. Two passengers on the vessel then began throwing bags overboard. Once the passengers finished throwing the bags overboard, the operator of their vessel began to vary his speed and maneuver the vessel wildly, attempting to evade the CBP-AMO agents.

The agents rendered the engine on the individuals' vessel inoperable. The three individuals on the vessel were then taken into custody. A subsequent search located three black duffel bags containing seventy-five kilogram packages of cocaine.

The three men are charged with possession with intent to distribute more than five kilograms of cocaine on a covered vessel, and conspiracy to commit the same offense, in violation of 46 U.S.C. § 70503(a)(1) & 46 U.S.C. § 70506(b).

If convicted, they face a maximum penalty of life imprisonment. A federal district court judge will determine any sentence after considering the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

CBP-AMO and Homeland Security Investigations are investigating the case. Assistant U.S. Attorney Adam Sleeper is prosecuting the case.

This effort is part of an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) operation. OCDETF identifies, disrupts, and dismantles the highest-level criminal organizations that threaten the United States using a prosecutor-led, intelligence-driven, multi-agency approach. Additional information about the OCDETF Program can be found at <https://www.justice.gov/OCDETF>.

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.