

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Puerto Rico Man Traveling to St. Thomas on Boat With \$316,930 in Cooler Sentenced to 6 Months For Lying to Federal Agents

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ST. CROIX — United States Attorney Gretchen C.F. Shappert announced Thursday that District Court Chief Judge Robert A. Molloy sentenced Blas Panzardi Davila, 38, to six months in prison and two years of supervised release, following the defendant's guilty plea to making a false statement to agents of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI).

According to court documents, Davila was the sole operator of a vessel traveling without lights from Puerto Rico to St. Thomas on January 14, 2021. The Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Air Marine Interdiction Unit pulled alongside the vessel and inquired of

the lack of lights on the vessel. Davila responded that the lights were not working. CBP marine boarded the vessel and discovered a large white cooler, and Davila denied knowing the contents of the cooler.

Officers opened the cooler which contained \$316,930 in United States currency. HSI agents subsequently questioned the defendant about the currency, and Davila initially lied regarding his knowledge of the currency and whether he owned it. The defendant subsequently acknowledged ownership of the funds.

The \$316,930 in U.S. currency and the vessel operated by Davila were administratively forfeited by HSI.

This case was investigated by Customs Border Protection and Homeland Security Investigations. It was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Everard E. Potter.

This prosecution was part of an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) investigation.