

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Suspects Threw 79 Kilos of Cocaine Out of Boat as Feds Closed In on Their Location Near St. Thomas

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ST. THOMAS — U.S. Attorney Gretchen C.F. Shappert has announced that two Puerto Rican men were arrested Tuesday in St. Thomas on criminal charges related to possession with intent to distribute 79 kilograms of cocaine.

According to court documents, on March 29, Wesly Albert Amaro and Brian Santiago Gonzalez, were stopped in the waters near Savannah Island, just west of St. Thomas. At approximately 4:00 a.m., the United States Coast Guard detected a vessel operating without navigation lights traveling at a high rate of speed from Culebra, PR towards Hendrick Bay, St. Thomas.

Customs and Boarder Protection Air and Marine (AMO) vessels responded as the Coast Guard provided updates of the vessel's location. AMO agents located the lights-out vessel using radar and attempted a stop. The vessel fled while the two men onboard jettisoned bags overboard. The vessel would not heave to, so AMO agents disabled the vessel's engine. During the chase, AMO agents marked when and where bags were discarded from the vessel. Upon, returning to the marked areas, AMO agents recovered three duffel bags containing 79 kilograms of suspected cocaine.

CBP-AMO, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), and Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) are investigating the case. 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.

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>.