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Two Dead, 16 Rescued After Illegal Immigrants Disembark Vessel at Haulover Bay in St. John

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Ernice Gilbert **August 21, 2022**

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Haulover Bay, St. John

ST. JOHN — Two immigrants drowned after a vessel dropped off eighteen nationals of various countries at Haulover Bay in St. John during the wee hours of Sunday morning, the V.I. Police Department has confirmed to the Consortium. Previously, a female adult was listed as missing, however her body was found Sunday afternoon.

Police Commissioner Ray Martinez said that the 911 Emergency Call Center received a call from a St. John resident at about 4:15 a.m. Sunday, reporting that immigrants were coming ashore on St. John. Officers responded to the scene and started making contact with the immigrants in the water and on land at about 5:00 a.m.

Mr. Martinez, who reminded that the investigation remains fluid, said eighteen individuals were aboard the vessel, which came from Saint Martin. It included two Iranians, a Guyanese and fifteen Venezuelans — all of whom were adults except one child.

"Right now we know that one male individual has drowned and that body has been recovered," the commissioner said earlier today, adding that law enforcement officials were not certain whether the deceased was a passenger or a crew member of the vessel.

The vessel is said to have dropped the individuals at their destination before leaving, with the immigrants disembarking at a certain distance and swimming their way to shore, according to Mr. Martinez.

The immigrants, who were attempting illegal entry into the U.S., were being transported to St. Thomas by law enforcement Sunday afternoon to be turned over to Customs and Border Protection for processing, the commissioner said.

The operation is a joint effort between the V.I. Police Department, CPB, the U.S. Coast Guard and the National Park Service.