

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Three Venezuelans Sentenced to Several Years in Prison on Cocaine Conspiracy Charge

Crime / **Published On November 28, 2022 04:28 PM /**

Staff Consortium **November 28, 2022**



United States Coast Guard (USCG) Cutter Donald H. Horsley

ST. CROIX — United States Attorney Delia L. Smith announced today that Algler Rodriguez-Boadas, 21, Johan J. Pacheco-Lezama, 34, and Henry Gonzalez-Noriega, 48, were sentenced by District Court Judge Wilma Lewis on one count of conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute cocaine while on board a vessel subject to the jurisdiction of the United States.

PachecoLezama was sentenced to 46 months of imprisonment, followed by two years supervised release, and Rodriguez-Boadas and Gonzalez-Noriega were sentenced to 41

months of imprisonment, followed by 2 years supervised release. The defendants were also ordered to pay a \$100 special assessment fee and are subject to deportation after serving their sentences.

According to court documents, on September 25, 2019, the United States Coast Guard (USCG) Cutter Donald Horsley intercepted a suspicious 55-foot vessel displaying the name “La Gran Tormenta” with Venezuelan nationality at approximately 38 nautical miles south of St. Croix. The occupants of “La Gran Tormenta” failed to respond to USCG’s efforts to stop the vessel and later changed course and began jettisoning packages overboard.

USCG crew members subsequently retrieved two bales from the ocean that contained packages of brick-shaped objects which tested positive for cocaine and weighed approximately 49 kilograms. After requesting and receiving permission to stop the vessel from Venezuela, USCG unsuccessfully attempted a right-of-visit boarding of the vessel. After gaining control of the “La Gran Tormenta” by disabling the vessel’s engine, USCG crew members detained 11 individuals, including Rodriguez-Boadas, PachecoLezama and Gonzalez-Noriega.

This case was investigated by the United States Coast Guard, Drug Enforcement Administration and Customs and Border Protection, and was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Melissa P. Ortiz.

This prosecution is part of an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) investigation. OCDETF identifies, disrupts, and dismantles the highest-level drug traffickers, money launderers, gangs, and transnational criminal organizations that threaten the United States by using a prosecutor-led, intelligence-driven, multi-agency approach that leverages the strengths of federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies against criminal networks.