

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Venezuelan Man Part of Group Who Smuggled 43 Kilograms of Cocaine Into USVI Pleads Guilty

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ST. THOMAS — United States Attorney Delia L. Smith announced Wednesday that Erickson Bolivar, 32, of Venezuela, pleaded guilty before Magistrate Judge Ruth Miller to conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute cocaine. Bolivar was one of three men charged with smuggling 41 kilograms of cocaine into the territory.

According to court documents, on November 21, 2021, at approximately 4:37 a.m., Customs and Boarder Protection Air and Marine and Homeland Security Investigations agents detected a vessel on the northwest coast of St. Thomas, VI. The agents launched their interceptor vessel and later stopped the target vessel traveling west towards Puerto Rico without navigation lights. Onboard were Bolivar, the captain of the vessel, and two

other occupants. Bolivar told agents that they were going fishing, but agents only found two fishing rods without any bait or lures. The vessel and its occupants were transported to Fajardo, PR, for further investigation. There, agents discovered brick-shaped objects containing a powder substance concealed in a hidden compartment in the stern of the vessel. A Drug Enforcement Administration laboratory analysis confirmed that the powder substance was cocaine weighing approximately 41 kilograms.

The case was investigated by Homeland Security Investigations, Customs and Border Protection and Drug Enforcement Administration and is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Kyle Payne.

This prosecution is part of an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) investigation. OCDETF identifies, disrupts, and dismantles the highest-level drug traffickers, money launderers, gangs, and transactional 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.