

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Costa Ricans Held With Over 4,100 Pounds of Marijuana in International Waters Face Charges in V.I. District Court

Crime / **Published On February 08, 2023 01:05 PM /**

Staff Consortium **February 08, 2023**



ST. CROIX — Three Costa Rican men are facing federal drug trafficking charges after being arrested in international waters off the coast of Panama late last year, according to U.S. Attorney for the V.I., Delia Smith.

A press release from the U.S. Attorney's Office indicates that on November 7 2022, the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Campbell came across a go-fast approximately 65 nautical miles south of Boca Chica, Panama. The vessel, Agamenon, was not flagged but bore 3 people on board. Apart from having no flag of origin, no registration number was visible.

Coast Guard officials say "bales of suspected contraband" were plainly visible on deck.

According to court documents, when stopped and questioned, the vessel's master claimed to be a Colombian national but could not produce regulation documents for the boat. Coast Guard officials say Colombian officials "could not confirm the origin of the vessel," prompting the Coast Guard to deem the boat "one without nationality, subjecting it to the jurisdiction of the United States."

A subsequent search of the vessel yielded over 50 bales of what later proved to be marijuana totalling just over 4,100 pounds. The three men on board, Luis Orellana-Orellano, Keyran Coto-Lopez, and Alonso Hernandez-Hernandez, were ultimately charged in connection with the drug smuggling operation.

Wednesday's press release informed that 48-year old Orellana-Orellano and 27 year-old Coto-Lopez appeared before a US Magistrate judge and charged with conspiracy to possess marijuana on board a vessel subject to jurisdiction of the United States.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant US Attorney Melissa Ortiz and investigated jointly by the U.S. Coast Guard and the Drug Enforcement Agency.