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Nicaraguan Man Facing 20 Years in Prison For Possession of 630 Kilos of Cocaine

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ST. CROIX — Victor Reyes-Martinez, a 40-year-old man from Nicaragua, has pleaded guilty to conspiracy to possess with the intent to distribute cocaine while onboard a vessel subject to the jurisdiction of the United States, United States Attorney for the V.I., Delia L. Smith announced Friday.

Reyes-Martinez entered his plea before Magistrate Judge Emile A. Henderson, III. The sentencing date for Reyes-Martinez will be set by the Court, and he faces a maximum of 20 years in prison. A federal district judge will determine any sentence after considering the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

According to court documents, on September 11, 2022, a maritime patrol aircraft on routine patrol south of the Dominican Republic detected a go-fast vessel navigating on a northerly course approximately 80 nautical miles south of Bani, Dominican Republic. The U.S.S. Billings was dispatched to the area and observed that the vessel had no flag flown, no registration numbers, and no name painted on its hull. The Dominican Republic Navy later advised that the vessel was not registered with their country. The vessel was, therefore, treated as one without nationality, thereby subjecting it to the laws of the United States.

Upon boarding the vessel, the U.S.S. Billings team detained Reyes-Martinez and another individual and located 18 bales of cocaine weighing approximately 630 kilograms. The United States Coast Guard, Homeland Security Investigations, and Drug Enforcement Administration are investigating this case, and Assistant United States Attorney Evan Rikhye is prosecuting the case.

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