

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Drug Smuggler Caught in St. Thomas Waters Receives 9-Year Prison Sentence

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ST. THOMAS — A Puerto Rico man has been sentenced to 108 months in prison after being convicted of possession with intent to distribute a controlled substance aboard a vessel under U.S. jurisdiction.

United States Attorney Delia L. Smith has announced that Chief District Court Judge Robert A. Molloy also sentenced 31-year-old Sammy Monell-Osorio to five years of supervised release and ordered him to pay a \$100 special assessment.

Court documents reveal that on February 28, 2023, Customs and Border Protection Marine Interdiction officers detected a vessel without navigational lights on the west side

of St. Thomas, heading towards Puerto Rico. Monell-Osorio, the captain of the vessel, attempted to evade the officers when they ordered him to stop. The occupants of his vessel then threw a black bag overboard before the vessel was disabled for failure to heed the officer's commands. The black bag, containing 18 kilograms of cocaine, was later retrieved from the ocean.

The case was investigated by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Marine Interdiction Unit and Homeland Security Investigations, with Assistant United States Attorneys Everard Potter and Natasha Baker prosecuting.

The prosecution is part of an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) investigation, which aims to identify, disrupt, and dismantle high-level drug traffickers, money launderers, gangs, and transnational criminal organizations that threaten the United States using a prosecutor-led, intelligence-driven, multi-agency approach.