

PRVI Partner Profiles

PRVI HIDTA Executive Board Chair, US Marshal Wilmer Ocasio-Ibarra



Wilmer Ocasio-Ibarra took office as the United States Marshal of the District of Puerto Rico on September 29, 2019. The District of Puerto Rico includes the Court House in Old San Juan, Hato Rey, and Ponce. Puerto Rico ranks among the top 10 districts in prisoner population within the U.S. Marshals Service.

Wilmer Ocasio-Ibarra has held positions in various areas of state and local law enforcement in his homeland of Puerto Rico. Earlier in his career, he worked as the Deputy Commissioner of the Guaynabo City Police Department and as a Technical Sergeant in the Puerto Rico National Guard, State Command Air Group 704th Security Forces Squadron.

He has fulfilled roles such as Director of External Resources and Federal Grants for the Puerto Rico Police Department, Special Assistant to the Director of the Bureau of Special Investigations for the Puerto Rico Department of Justice, Security Director and Law Enforcement Liaison for the Puerto Rico Department of Family Affairs. During his time at the Department of Family Affairs, he was actively involved in the Puerto Rico Crimes Against Children Task Force and served as Sergeant-At-Arms for the Puerto Rico House of Representatives. Additionally, Marshal Ocasio-Ibarra has contributed to the implementation of public policies, strategies against drugs and illegal weapons, and integration programs between state and local Law Enforcement Departments and Puerto Rico's Department of Public Safety.

Currently, Marshal Ocasio-Ibarra plays a crucial role as Chairman of the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA) Executive Board. His expertise in the law enforcement arena has facilitated his involvement with the law enforcement community. Additionally, he is a member of the Director's Marshals Advisory Council of the USMS.

Marshal Ocasio-Ibarra graduated from the Inter American University of Puerto Rico with a Bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice, majoring in Criminal Investigation. He also completed his Master's degree at the Graduate School of Criminal Justice from the Inter American University Metropolitan Campus.

PRVI HIDTA Executive Board Vice Chair, MG Miguel A. Mendez

Major General Miguel A. Mendez has served as the 23rd Adjutant General for Puerto Rico since July 2023. In this role, he advises the Governor on military readiness and oversees federal, state, and community missions for the Puerto Rico National Guard. Prior to this, he was the Acting Adjutant General and Assistant Adjutant General, playing a key leadership role during the island's earthquake response and COVID-19 vaccination efforts.



MG Mendez has also served as Deputy Commanding General for U.S. Army South, covering 31 countries across Central and South America. Throughout his career, he has held various leadership positions, including Land Component Commander and Commander of the 101st Troop Command.

He holds degrees in Business Administration, Strategic Studies, and a well as a Juris Doctor. During his career, MG Mendez has received numerous military awards for his service and leadership. He is married with two children.

LIAISON ENGAGEMENT

Signing of the OCDETF Caribbean Corridor Strike Force MOU

On July 29, 2024, members of the PRVI HIDTA Executive Board met to jointly signed an OCDETF Caribbean Corridor Strike Force MOU. This Strike Force is designated under HIDTA as well, thus leveraging resources under both DOJ and ONDCP. Under the leadership of United States Attorney W. Stephen Muldrow, this MOU was strategically written to enhance cooperation, promote information sharing, and accommodate co-location of LE partners at the HIDTA building in Puerto Rico.

The MOU further sets forth new guidelines for our Strike Force that ensures interagency cooperation, growth potential, and the availability of resources to ensure so that our initiatives have all the tools they need to continue performing at a high level. Under this agreement, DEA, FBI, HSI, ATF, CGIS and the US Marshals Service will coordinate investigative efforts with the US Attorney's Office in combating transnational crime.



Prevention Initiative, Puerto Rico - ALIANZA

Through the Prevention in Action project, students were trained to serve as leaders and role models in the topic of drug prevention education among their peers. The experience gave them the opportunity to reaffirm their commitment to prevention and become agents of change. Students also worked on the creative process of using what they have learned into images and dialogue to produce a television advertisement that will be part of the Alliance's educational campaign for this year 2024, and next year 2025.

Over 200 students from the Arístides Cales Quirós schools in Guayanilla, Rafael Irizarry Rivera in Peñuelas, Felipe Colón Díaz in Juana Díaz, José Padín and Emilio Delgado, both from Corozal, participated in the closing events of the Prevention in Action project that was part of the curriculum in the five schools. Antonio "Tony" Torres, retired Chief Deputy US Marshal was the guest speaker at the activities.

This initiative is a joint effort of the Alliance for a Drug-Free Puerto Rico sponsored by PR/USVI High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area, with the objective of preventing drug use, trafficking and violence.



Above, left: Students from the José Padín and Emilio Delgado schools in Corozal at the closing event at the Guateque Center in Corozal. Right: Antonio "Tony" Torres, retired Chief Deputy US Marshal at the closing events.

USVI HIDTA Prevention Initiative

The US Virgin Islands HIDTA Prevention Initiative is gearing up for another successful round of presentations in the school's territory wide. Over the last few weeks, a number of meetings have taken place with various administrative personnel representing the public schools in both the St. Thomas/St. John District, and the St. Croix District. PHA Amulen Wirsiy, PR-USVI HIDTA Deputy Director James Doby, Ms. Monique Creque (Director of Partner Relations, Virgin Islands Department of Education) and DIO Rodney F. Querrard have presented the leadership of each district with specifics as to a timeline needed, and what the presentations would entail. This is the prevention initiatives third year with approximately 7000 students participating. The ORS, CDC, and the PR-USVI HIDTA has very interactive presentations catered to each group of students by grade, age, and subject necessity (requested by teachers and counselors). Subjects this year will again include drugs (including the deadly opioids), marijuana, marijuana edibles, pills (both prescription and over the counter), alcohol, vaping, peer pressure, bullying, among other subjects.



Picture left: PHA Amulen Wirsiy and DIO Rodney F. Querrard, along with initiative partners after school presentation. Picture right: Students attending a USVI HIDTA Prevention Initiative event.



U.S. Virgin Islands

Overdose Response Strategy

NARCAN Training

The USVI HIDTA Prevention Initiative, along with the USVI Department of Health and the Virgin Islands Police Department initiated a training that took place on July 10th and 11th 2024 at the University of the Virgin Islands gymnasium training rooms, St. Thomas. This training is part of a continuing effort to have the majority, if not all First Responders in the USVI trained and issued naloxone. Trainers included lead trainer Ms. Jacqueline Greenidge-Payne, Director of the State Office of EMS for the Department of Health, USVI, Ms. Titania Felix - Compliance Officer, Ms. Jacquelyn Parsons-Browne - Compliance Officer, Mr. Jorge Melendez - Compliance Officer and Ms. Natasha Roman - Compliance Officer, and Rodney F. Querrard, DIO, USVI. This second round of training in Naloxone, CPR, First Aid and AED, among others, was once again "on point". The engagement by every police/peace officer in the class was obvious. Police Training Academy Supervisor Captain Maria Colon coordinated the selection of police officers and peace officers not only from the VIPD, but also from the VI Port Authority Police, VI Legislature, VI Capital Police, and an Agent from the VI Attorney General's Office.

The goal of the Virgin Islands HIDTA Prevention Initiative is to continue its quest to ensure that all (as many we can) First Responders are versed and knowledgeable in the seriousness of the opioid crisis affecting people in the United States, and the Caribbean Each segment of the training is very important, especially for First Responders. In the event of an opioid exposure to a fellow First Responder or citizen, and the naloxone does not work, and the officer on the scene is not trained to do CPR, and is not equipped to do CPR, it is a possibility that the person could die if it takes too long for an ambulance to arrive on the scene. That is why this training, especially the hands-on part of it, is so important. Naloxone training can be done quickly, but there is much more to saving a life.



Picture left: First Responders on St. Thomas at a Naloxone training. Picture right: First Responders and instructors group photo.



ORS Supports VI Health Fair in St. Thomas

1. In early July, the USVI Department of Health, the ORS' leading public health partner in the VI, called on PHA Amulen Wirsiy to help coordinate the Wellness Fair in partnership with the Innovative Readiness Training (IRT) team. With a little over a week to coordinate logistics and partner needs, PHA Wirsiy assisted the Division of Behavioral Health in linking people with mental/behavioral health needs to individualized care that they would have otherwise had to find and fund access to. PHA Wirsiy provided harm reduction guidance and passive programming on included opioid and opiate, cannabis, tobacco and alcohol use, in addition to scheduling screenings for attendees with the Department of Health's Case Managers and Counselors. This week long event ultimately provided FREE at-home COVID and HIV test kits, FREE dental, optometry, and medical screenings to over 2000 people across the three sister islands of the VI.



PHA Amulen Wirsiy participating in the Health Fair.

2. Employee wellness at Oriental Bank reached out to Behavioral Health requesting assistance with a mental and behavioral health program for their employees that highlighted addiction prevention. This initiative was set to be part 3 of their wellness programming that addressed stress, trauma, and other threats to mental health during September in honor of National Suicide Prevention Month. In partnership with the ORS' public health partner (Department of Health), PHA Amulen provided an interactive HealthCoping Skills workshop that provided participants with the biology of addiction, causes and co-morbidities, along with tips and information on how to deal with stress using healthy avenues. Participants provided positive feedback, including 90% of participants reporting a high likeliness of using materials learned in the workshop.

Puerto Rico

Migrant Health Center 2024 Symposium



DIO José Rodríguez at the Symposium.

On August 29th, 2024, Public Health Analyst (PHA) Francisco A. Torres-Cardona and Drug Intelligence Officer (DIO) José O. Rodríguez attended the first Migrant Health Center Symposium in San Juan, Puerto Rico. This symposium was intended for primary health care service providers and community-based organizations. During the event, the PR ORS team set up a booth with informational one-pagers on stigma reduction and the Overdose Detection Mapping Application Program (ODMAP). Attendees were introduced to the Overdose Response Strategy (ORS) purpose and efforts, as well as PR USVI High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) initiatives.

Plenaries and seminars were dedicated to a variety of services and strategies related to psychoactive substance use. Topics on overdose prevention, stigma and harm reduction, treatment, LGBTQIA+ community, telemedicine and novel technological features were presented during this full day symposium.

One of the seminars offered at this event was Telehealth that includes Telemedicine, which is the use of electronic information and communications technologies to provide and support health care when distance separates the participants. Telehealth services may include telemedicine consultations and remote patient monitoring. In contrast, the virtual care model encompasses clinical and nonclinical remote healthcare delivery, such as digital health platforms, nonclinical consultations and telemedicine consults. This method of providing health care has revolutionized medicine as it is. The seminar also provided information regarding the laws and regulations concerning the virtual care model.



Suicide Prevention Training

On September 11th, 2024, during suicide prevention awareness month, PR PHA Francisco Torres-Cardona facilitated a suicide prevention training session. This two-and-a-half hour presentation covered signs and symptoms, risk and protective factors, as well as suggestions to assess and support individuals struggling with suicidal ideations.



PHA Francisco Torres-Cardona during the presentation.

OEND Activity for Municipal Police Officers in Cabo Rojo

On September 16th, 2024, at the Blanca E. Colberg Rodríguez Public Library in Cabo Rojo, personnel from the Mental Health and Against Addiction Services Administration (ASSMCA in Spanish) facilitated the Cabo Rojo municipal police effectiveness with the overdose education and naloxone distribution activity

Due to a suspected overdose event of a Cabo Rojo municipal police officer amidst an intervention with a couple (male and female) that were arrested for assault, Sgt. J Ramírez contacted Drug Intelligence Officer (DIO) José O. Rodríguez for assistance coordinating overdose response training and distribution of nasal spray naloxone kits (known as Narcan) for their police staff.



Melissa Díaz-Montalván (ASSMCA) informing the municipal police of Cabo Rojo on how to identify an overdose and administer nasal spray naloxone.

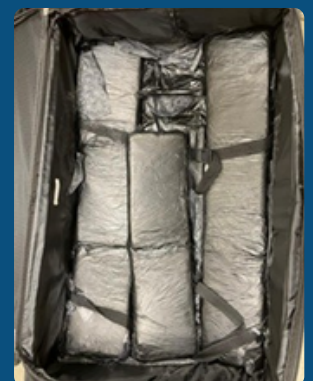
HIDTA INVESTIGATIVE SUCCESS

HIDTA – AIRTAT

During this quarter, AirTAT agents continued to conduct strategic interdictions at the terminals of the Luis Munoz Marin International Airport. In addition, AirTAT agents have been conducting inspections at the cargo areas of the airport and at the United States Postal Services (USPS) facilities in order to identify packages that contained narcotics destined to the Continental United States (CONUS). As a result, AirTAT agents have seized a total of 805 kilograms of cocaine, arrested five individuals transporting cocaine and seized \$86,450 in assets as a result of multiple investigations.



Recent AIRTAT seizures.



Caribbean Corridor Strike Force

On August 9, 2024, United States Customs and Border Protection Agency (USCBP) Marine Interdiction Unit (MIU) from Fajardo Marine Unit intercepted a 40ft Yola type vessel with three 250 horse power outboard engines attached to the stern of the boat. Fajardo Marine Unit launched Coastal Interceptor Vessel to interdict the vessel approximately 14 Nautical Miles (NM) south of Patillas, PR. Agents subsequently arrested three subjects: two Dominican nationals and one Colombian national. In addition, during the search of the vessel, agents discovered 50 bales of cocaine with an weight of approximately 1597.9 kgs. All three defendants were indicted for charges of Title 21 USC 952 and 960 (b)(1)(B)(ii) and 963; Conspiracy to Import 5 kilograms or more of a mixture or substance containing a detectable amount of cocaine and Schedule II controlled substance, Attempt to Import Controlled Substances, Title 46 USC 70502, 70503 and 70506 and Title 18 USC 2 ; Conspiracy to commit an offense against the United States, to wit: to possess with the intent to distribute 5 kilograms or more of cocaine, a Schedule II controlled substance, while aboard a covered vessel.



40-foot vessel with 1597.9 Kg of cocaine seized on August 9th, 2024.

St. Thomas HIDTA

On August 25, 2024, DEA St. Thomas received information that a DTO dispatched two (2) vessels (1 pick-up vessel and 1 decoy vessel) from Tortola, British Virgin Islands (BVI) to conduct an at sea transfer in the area of Saba Bank. Following the intel, DEA St. Thomas issued a CMA with the detailed information. Through coordination between DEA St. Thomas and Customs and Border Patrol Air and Marine Operations St. Thomas Marine Unit (STTMU), a CBP Marine Patrol Aircraft (MPA) located the pick-up vessel meeting with a Venezuelan fishing vessel and observed the transfer of multiple bales of contraband. The pick-up vessel was followed by the MPA as it returned towards the BVI's. Simultaneous to the pick-up vessel returning to the BVI's, the Royal Virgin Islands Police Force (RVIPF) attempted to conduct a traffic stop of a DTO member's vehicle. A vehicle pursuit ensued, and the suspect vehicle fled and ultimately crashed in the area of Hawk's Nest, Tortola, BVI.

RVIPF was able to arrest one Venezuelan National and recover a fully loaded AK-47. Due to the vehicle pursuit, the pick-up vessel changed its course of travel and ultimately discarded the bales of contraband on Jost Van Dyke, a nearby island. The pick-up vessel then returned to Sopher's Hole, BVI, where the RVIPF engaged in a vessel pursuit.

The pick-up vessel ran aground, and all three (3) occupants absconded. RVIPF ultimately seized the 38' Fountain Center Console with three (3) Mercury 300 Outboard Engines valued at approximately \$350,000. This investigation is ongoing.



38 foot go fast beached after chase on August 25, 2024

St. Thomas HIDTA

On August 28, 2024, Law Enforcement partners received information from the Royal Virgin Islands Police Force (RVIPF) that a known DTO, was transporting a quantity of cocaine from Tortola, British Virgin Islands (BVI) to St. John, USVI, via maritime conveyance. Moments prior to this intel, CBP AMO STTMU surveillance captured 2 individuals (one of which was armed with an AR-15 rifle) traveling along a remote trail in St. John, USVI, that is utilized by drug traffickers to receive quantities of cocaine from the BVI, via maritime conveyance. Moments later, the 2 individuals were observed exiting the trail, now carrying multiple duffle bags, then depart the area driving a small SUV.



Bags containing 61 kilos of cocaine seized August 28, 2024

Through collaborative efforts between DEA St. Thomas, CBP AMO STTMU, FBI, BP and HSI, surveillance was conducted on the SUV. A short time later a traffic stop was conducted on the SUV, utilizing BP's tactical unit, BORTAC. Agents arrested 2 individuals and ultimately seized 61 kilograms of cocaine, 2 AR-15 style "ghost guns" and 1 Glock 22 handgun. This investigation is ongoing.

Regional Violence Overview



2ND ANNUAL US VIRGIN ISLANDS EMERGING THREATS SYMPOSIUM



CYBERSECURITY



MARITIME SECURITY



EMERGING TECHNOLOGY



PUBLIC HEALTH



CRIME

**2ND ANNUAL USVI
EMERGING THREATS SYMPOSIUM
NOVEMBER 14-15, 2024
at the
WESTIN FRENCHMAN'S REEF**



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