

Message from Executive Director John Kanig

The Puerto Rico – US Virgin Islands HIDTA has kicked off 2026 on a strong note. In last December's newsletter issue, Deputy Director Doby and I mentioned that our focus was to continue growing strategies for our area of responsibility. To this effect, I am proud to welcome on board another key Team partner, Roxanna M. Rodríguez-Torres, Senior Advisor. Her background and vast experience will, without any doubt, bring great results.

In collaboration with our partners from DEA and its Caribbean Division, a roundtable with the Deputy Assistant Secretary of War Michael Buemi was held on February 9th. DASW Buemi was accompanied by USNORTHCOM Chief, Keith Kramer; and Miguel Besosa, Policy Analyst of the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of War, Counternarcotics and Stabilization Policy. The topic of the roundtable was: Opportunities for Law Enforcement and Department of War Collaboration. The invitation to the roundtable was extended to our Executive Board and Federal law Enforcement partners.

In February I met with Mr. Ryan Crosby, Director of the Office of Transnational Issues, Research and Analysis Division of FinCEN, U.S. Department of Treasury. Mr. Crosby was in Puerto Rico as a speaker at the 22nd Puerto Rico Symposium Against Money Laundering hosted by the Puerto Rico Bankers Association. Mr. Crosby visited our office to learn about our mission and threats.

Finally, you may recall that in December we announced that both Deputy Director James Doby and I had the opportunity to review multiple submissions for the National HIDTA Awards. We are proud to announce that the Puerto Rico – US Virgin Islands HIDTA was awarded the Public Health, Public Safety Collaboration for the USVI Prevention Initiative. Our congratulations to our Drug Intelligence Officer, Rodney F. Querrard and Amulen-Lalaf Wirsiy for their extraordinary performance.

PR-USVI HIDTA PARTNERS





PR-USVI HIDTA 1st Quarter 2026 Newsletter

IN MEMORY OF MIGUEL ANGEL RIVERA CUADRADO

Miguel Ángel Rivera Cuadrado
Postal Inspector, Team Leader
United States Postal Inspection Service



On February 22, 2026, the law enforcement community of Puerto Rico lost an outstanding agent, consummate professional, and dear friend. Postal Inspector Miguel Angel Rivera Cuadrado lost his life in an off-duty traffic accident in Puerto Rico. Miguel was a valuable member of the law enforcement community in Puerto Rico for nearly 2 decades. Most knew him as "Mickey". He previously served with the US Coast Guard Intelligence Center, Sector San Juan, and worked with the entire law enforcement community and HIDTA on counterdrug missions throughout the region. He later began working with the US Postal Inspection Service as an Agent and Team Leader where he continued serving the community targeting smuggling organizations attempting to exploit the US Mail Service to move illegal contraband. The entire law enforcement community mourns his lost. Rest in Peace.

WELCOME TO HIDTA

PR-USVI HIDTA proudly welcomes Mrs. Roxanna Rodríguez-Torres to the HIDTA Family. Mrs. Roxanna Rodríguez-Torres joins the PR-USVI HIDTA after retiring from a 28-year career as a military service member and federal officer. She last served as the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Principal Advisor on Transnational Organized Crime, while also serving as the DHS Representative to the U.S. Caribbean Territories. Prior to her assignment in Puerto Rico, Mrs. Rodríguez-Torres was the inaugural DHS Deputy Assistant Secretary for Transnational Organized Crime, and previously served as the DHS Deputy Assistant Secretary for Law Enforcement Policy. Mrs. Rodríguez-Torres filled these roles at DHS after a two-year tour at the White House as the National Security Council's Director for Transnational Organized Crime.



In 1998, Mrs. Rodríguez-Torres began her career as a Counterintelligence Agent and linguist with the Louisiana Army National Guard and, in 2001, became a Signals Intelligence Analyst (SIGINT) with the U.S. Customs Service. With the establishment of DHS, Mrs. Rodríguez-Torres served in several positions with Homeland Security Investigations (HSI): as an intelligence analyst assigned to HSI New Orleans; as a first, second, and third-line supervisor with oversight of all-source intelligence analysts assigned to HSI Headquarters; and ultimately as Chief of Staff for the HSI Office of Intelligence.

Mrs. Rodríguez-Torres was born in Guayama, Puerto Rico; raised in New Orleans, Louisiana; and received a Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies from the University of New Orleans. She also obtained linguist certifications in Russian, Kurdish, and Spanish from the Department of Defense – Defense Language Institute, and was awarded the 2013 Meritorious Unit Citation from the Director of National Intelligence, the 2018 LTG Patrick M. Hughes Award, and the 2019 University of New Orleans Young Alum of the Year Award.

US VIRGIN ISLANDS PRESCRIPTION DRUG DROP BOX PROGRAM

"Success Beyond Belief" is a good way of stating the success of our US Virgin Islands HIDTA Prevention Initiative Prescription Drug Drop Box Program, DIO Rodney F. Querrard states. "The people of the US Virgin Islands are fully supporting this important program." In just over a year (launch was February 12, 2025), the program has collected a total of 98.04 kilograms (216.14 pounds) of prescription drugs from five drop boxes located on St. Thomas, St. Croix and St. John. Due to their strategic locations in both districts, and information being shared about the Drop Boxes on social media (and other media platforms), radio talk shows, and flyers posted at various government offices, doctor's offices, hospitals etc., the program is a success.







"The collaboration between PR-US Virgin Islands HIDTA, Virgin Islands Police Department, Drug Enforcement Administration, US Postal Service, and the VI Department of Health, is a testament that together, local and federal agencies and departments, can accomplish great things for the betterment of the people of the US Virgin Islands. Collecting and ensuring that these prescriptions drugs are properly destroyed is a win for everyone!"

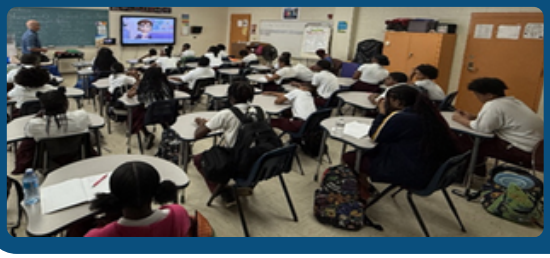
US VIRGIN ISLANDS HIDTA PREVENTION INITIATIVE "POSITIVE VIBES ALONE" 2025-2026 SCHOOL YEAR PRESENTATIONS

The US Virgin Islands HIDTA Prevention Initiative "Positive Vibes Alone", which consist of the Drug Intelligence Officer (DIO) for the US Virgin Islands (Rodney F. Querrard), and USVI Department of Education and Department of Health representatives, started off 2026 with school presentations in both the St. Thomas and the St. Croix districts. Between January 22nd and March 25th, twenty two (22) presentations were given for approximately 884 students, teachers and counselors, at seven (7) schools. The students in attendance were in the 3rd through 12th grades. Puerto Rico's DIO José Betancourt participated in one of the day's discussion at the Lockhart K-8 School on St. Thomas. All topics of discussion continue to include Substance Abuse/Misuse, Peer Pressure, Violence, Opioids (prescribed and illicit), Edibles, Marijuana, Alcohol, Vaping, Bullying, and Making Positive Life Choices. DIO Querrard is presently in discussion with USVI Department of Education officials about conducting similar presentations at school Parent/Teacher Association meetings, and Teacher Workshops.



Above: DIO Rodney F. Querrard speaking with 3rd graders; Below: DIO Querrard, Puerto Rico DIO José Betancourt, Taylor Perry (Dept. of Health), along with teachers at a school presentation on St. Thomas.





Left: PR DIO José Betancourt speaking with students on St. Thomas; Right: DIO Querrard, Giselle Schjang (Dept. Of Education), Tamara Ramos (Dept. of Health) and teachers and counselors at a school presentation on St. Croix.



DEA CARIBBEAN DIVISION LAUNCHES "FENTANYL FREE USVI"



DIO Rodney F. Querrard, DEA SAC Michael Miranda, DEA PIO José A. Velázquez-Vega, USVI Department of Health Commissioner Justa Encarnación, VI Police Department Commissioner Mario Brooks, and DEA ASAC Evan Martínez speaking at "Fentanyl Free USVI" press briefing.

The Drug Enforcement Administration's Caribbean Division, in collaboration with the US Virgin Islands Police Department, USVI Department of Health and PR-USVI HIDTA launched the Fentanyl Free USVI Initiative on January 20, 2026. The initiative aligns with DEA's mission of strengthening its fight against the deadly synthetic opioid crisis. The objective is a comprehensive enforcement and public awareness initiative focused on protecting lives and communities throughout the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Michael Miranda, Special Agent in Charge of the Caribbean Division, stated that DEA has noticed an "uptick in fentanyl." The initiative, he said, adopts a "multifaceted approach." While the DEA has observed a "downward trend in fentanyl deaths," Mr. Miranda promised "we're not going to stop until we get to zero."

DEA's Fentanyl Free USVI Initiative hinges on enforcement, education, and partnerships. On the enforcement front, DEA will continue to attack the Mexican cartels that have flooded the region and the United States with fentanyl. On the education front, the importance of raising awareness on the dangers of fentanyl, particularly within youthful audiences, is necessary. Similar efforts on the prevention side have been ongoing in the US Virgin Islands. Department of Health Commissioner Justa Encarnacion stated that the opioid crisis is a "public health emergency. The Department of Health, through its Behavioral Health Division, is focused on public education on the use of Narcan, a medication used to reverse opioid overdoses." Trainings, led by the US Virgin Islands HIDTA Prevention Initiative, Department of Health, and the Virgin Islands Police Department, have taken place. These trainings will continue until the majority of First Responders in the territory are trained and issued Naloxone.



DEA ASAC Evan Martínez, PR-USVI HIDTA Deputy Director James Doby, DEA SAC Michael Miranda, VIPD Cops Show host, DIO Rodney F. Querrard, Police Sergeant Milton Petersen (Lead Host, Cops Show), and DEA PIO José A. Velázquez-Vega at WSTA Radio's "COPS SHOW" for a pre-press briefing conversation.

The US Virgin Islands Prevention Initiative "Positive Vibes Alone", along with Department of Health and Department of Education representatives, have been steadily working with the territory's schools to build a trusting relationship and reduce the use of opioids and other drugs throughout the territory through education and information shared. Since 2021, over 13,000 students, teachers and counselors have benefited from the interactive trainings. Education and knowledge are the keys to saving lives. Individuals may be unaware that they are using fentanyl, which can be fatal in even extremely small doses.

The success of DEA's Fentanyl Free USVI Initiative relies on community involvement. Parents, educators, health care professionals, faith leaders, and community groups are encouraged play an active role in prevention.

ALIANZA PREVENTION INITIATIVE

The event was titled "Prevention in action Project". At this special event, the six (6) participating schools showcased their prevention campaigns on the big screen for the first time. It was held at the Polytechnic University in Hato Rey.





Left: Antonio Torres speaking to the students; Right: Director Katiana Pérez giving remarks.

OPIOID OVERDOSE RESPONSE TRAINING AND NALOXONE DISTRIBUTION

Between February and March 2026, the Puerto Rico ORS team facilitated five (5) Opioid Overdose Response (OOR) training sessions, including a condensed and adapted variation for public safety personnel and at community outreach and engagement activities. This variation provides practical information on opioid overdose signs and symptoms, followed by the steps to respond during an overdose event and a demonstration.

Team members from the Puerto Rico Police Department's Joint Forces of Rapid Action (FURA in Spanish) and task force officers (TFOs) from Homeland Security Investigation (HSI) attended the OOR training sessions, which included a section to address the perception of risks with fentanyl and occupational safety measures. Another brief session was facilitated for patients in the waiting room of the Centro de Sevicios Primarios de Salud de Patillas, satellite clinic of Santa Isabel. Naloxone kits were distributed in every session.

Also, a two-hour OOR session was facilitated for CSPSP headquarters personnel, completing the initial part of the naloxone distribution plan that started in August 2025.





Above: DIO José Betancourt addressing CSPSP personnel during an OOR training session; below: PHA Francisco Torres-Cardona demonstration of an overdose response to TFOs from HSI.

PUERTO RICO ORS ON X61 RADIO PATILLAS



Professional counselor Ana Martínez-Sanz, Dr. Luismiguel Rodríguez-Ríos, PHA Francisco Torres-Cardona and host Carmen "Socky" Rivera-González during the panel discussion at X61 Radio Patillas.

As part of the ongoing public health and public safety partnership to address the opioid overdose crisis, the PR ORS team, in collaboration with healthcare professionals from the Department of Mental Health of the Centro de Servicios Primarios de Salud de Patillas (CSPSP), participated in a live roundtable discussion on X61 Radio Patillas station.

The discussion aired during the the Salud y Bienestar segment, providing an opportunity to engage directly with the community through a widely accessible media platform. Panellists shared essential information regarding risk factors associated with the use of psychoactive substances, emphasizing prevention, early intervention, and community awareness.

This outreach effort highlights the continued commitment of the PR USVI HIDTA, the PR ORS team and public health partners to expand education initiatives, strengthen community engagement, and promote informed decision-making to reduce overdose incidents across Puerto Rico.

Risk factors are events and circumstances that can have detrimental consequences, including psychoactive substance use disorders and other mental health issues. Factors such as trauma and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), untreated or mistreated health problems, and congenital predisposition to addictive behaviors can increase the risks of developing mental health conditions, including substance use disorders. Timely identification of signs and symptoms, along with efficient coping skills, family/friend support and other healthy practices can reduce the impact of these risk factors.

Salud y Bienestar goes live at 10:00am AST on X61 Radio WEXS, 610am, Patillas.

STRENGTHENING FIRST RESPONDER READINESS THROUGH DRNA TRAINING IN CEIBA



In support of a coordinated public health and public safety approach to address the opioid overdose crisis, the PR ORS team delivered specialized training to personnel from the Department of Natural and Environmental Resources (DRNA in Spanish) Cuerpo de Vigilantes. During this initiative, nine agents received instruction on opioid overdose recognition and response, including the use of essential tools and protocols for immediate intervention. This effort enhances first responder preparedness, strengthens interagency collaboration, and supports life-saving interventions across Puerto Rico.

HIDTA LIAISON

STATUS OF MARIJUANA LEGISLATION IN THE US VIRGIN ISLANDS

The U.S. Virgin Islands legalized adult-use cannabis under the Virgin Islands Cannabis Use Act (2023), is expanding the existing medical cannabis framework originally approved by voters in 2014. The Office of Cannabis Regulation (OCR) is responsible for: licensing cannabis businesses, regulatory enforcement and compliance, seed-to-sale product tracking, public safety oversight and coordination with territorial and federal partners. The program is currently in the pre-commercial implementation phase. Cultivation is expected to begin in April 2026, with retail sales anticipated later in 2026 pending regulatory approvals and supply chain readiness. Current regulated participation levels remain relatively small while the commercial market develops. Commercial cultivation licenses were issued during 2025. Some licensees are expected to begin growing as early as April 2026. There are operational dispensaries authorized at this time. Before opening, license holders must complete: facility construction or renovation, security plan approval, compliance inspections, and METRC seed-to-sale system integration. Retail operations are expected later in 2026. All regulated cannabis products must undergo mandatory testing before entering the legal market.

HIDTA HOSTS INTERAGENCY MEETING WITH DASW & NORTHCOM

In collaboration with our partners from DEA and its Caribbean Division, a roundtable with the Deputy Assistant Secretary of War Michael Buemi was held on February 9th. DASW Buemi was accompanied by USNORTHCOM Chief, Keith Kramer; and Miguel Besosa, Policy Analyst of the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of War, Counternarcotics and Stabilization Policy. The topic of the roundtable was: Opportunities for Law Enforcement and Department of War Collaboration. The invitation to the roundtable was extended to our Executive Board and Federal law enforcement partners.







Executive Director John Kanig briefs the delegation on HIDTA operations in the Eastern Caribbean Region, DASW Buemi and team, NORTHCOM Commander & team

TRAINING

The PR-USVI HIDTA Training Initiative has conducted six (6) core courses, and 20 training sessions in the 4th quarter. Under enforcement, there were four (4) sessions at the San Juan Municipal Police Academy; two (2) sessions at Vega Baja Municipal Police Department, one (1) session at the Guaynabo Municipal Police Department. Additionally, two separate training sessions were offered to the law enforcement branch of the Department of Natural and Environmental Resources (DRNA in Spanish).

The Training Initiative also offered two anti – money laundering investigations classes as part of the onboarding process for new Task Force Officers assigned to investigate MLOs. Our most requested training courses for 2025 and 2026 continue to be as follows: Duty to Intervene by Police Officers; Use of Lethal Force and Supervisors Responsibility; Understanding the Federal Court System – Federal Court Testimony; Police Sworn Statements in State Drug Cases with Tabletop Exercises Court Testimony with Tabletop Exercises; Digital Evidence; and Miranda Rights. The PRVI HIDTA Training Initiative provided two classes in Digital Evidence and Sworn Statements in Drug Investigations for over 100 San Juan Municipal Police cadets as part of their Academy's curriculum.

Training Assistance Provided

Puerto Rico - Virgin Islands

2025

Please note: Training hours on this report are equal to the hours sent to PMP and are rolled up to the nearest whole number for each quarter displayed.

Number of Students:	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Total
Enforcement	421	416	516	276	1,629
Analytical			3	1	4
Management	31	63	96	19	209
Demand Reduction		127	1,087	851	2,065
Total	452	606	1,702	1,147	3,907

Hours of Training Provided:	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Total
Enforcement	2,502	2,808	3,352	2,524	11,186
Analytical			6	2	8
Management	44	688	282	28	1,042
Demand Reduction		254	2,191	1,880	4,325
Total	2,546	3,750	5,831	4,434	16,561

	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Total
Total Number Surveys Sent:	404	443	597	265	1,709

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Left: San Juan Police Academy, Qtr. 1 - 2026; Right: Puerto Rico Department of Natural Resources Law Enforcement, Qtr. 4 – 2025

During the first quarter of 2026, the HIDTA Training Initiative coordinated a Use of Force course in collaboration with instructors from the Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers (FLETC). The training was attended by 24 participants from the Puerto Rico Police Department and the San Juan Municipal Police Department. The FLETC instructors received outstanding praise for their support.



FLETC Use of Force - San Juan Municipal Police –& Puerto Rico Police Bureau (FURA) Qtr. 1 - 2026



ST. THOMAS HIDTA INTERDICTS MARIJUANA GOING THROUGH CYRIL E. KING AIRPORT



The DEA St. Thomas Resident Office (STRO) continues to conduct multi-law enforcement agency investigations in the District of the Virgin Islands. On October 27, 2025, New York Drug Enforcement Task Force (NYDETF) Group T-42 provided DEA STRO intel regarding Raheem WILKINSON smuggling approximately 100 pounds of high-grade marijuana from San Francisco, CA, to St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands. On October 29, 2025, through coordination between the DEA STRO and Customs & Border Protection Anti-Terrorism Contraband Enforcement Team (A-TCET), A-TCET conducted an inspection on checked luggage onboard a Delta Airlines flight. A-TCET identified 2 suitcases belonging to WILKINSON and 1 suitcase belonging to co-conspirator, Jerron PEMBERTON. The suitcases were ultimately placed onto the baggage claim conveyor belt for retrieval. DEA STRO and A-TCET conducted surveillance of WILKINSON and PEMBERTON as they took custody of the 3 suitcases in question and ultimately attempted to exit the Cyril E. King Airport. WILKINSON, PEMBERTON and the 3 suitcases were detained and taken to secondary inspection. During secondary inspection 100 pounds of high-grade marijuana was located inside the 3 suitcases. WILKINSON and PEMBERTON were arrested. WILKINSON and PEMBERTON have both entered GUILTY pleas and are awaiting sentencing.

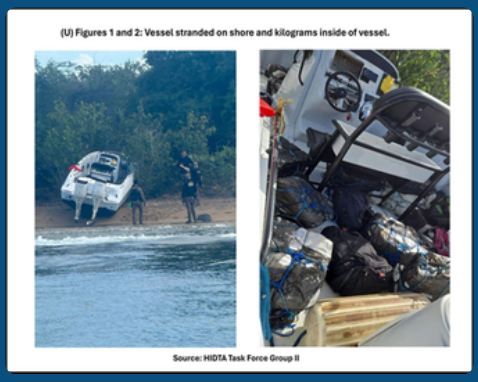
Above: marijuana seized during arrest of Raheem WILKINSON and Jerron PEMBERTON at the Cyril E. King Airport on St. Thomas; Right: One hundred pounds of marijuana seized during the interdiction at the Cyril E. King Airport.





HIDTA FAJARDO

On March 11, 2026, HIDTA Fajardo (TFG-II) and CBP officers observed a suspicious vessel trying to make landfall in Naguabo, PR, a municipality located on the east coast of the island, bordered by the Vieques Passage. Law enforcement officers then observed, as they approached the vessel, that such became erratic and sailed back out to sea. Immediately thereafter, the suspicious vessel hastily departed and ultimately ran aground in the Punta Arena area in Vieques, PR.



As law enforcement officials gave chase, they observed approximately six subjects absconding from said vessel into a heavily wooded area. A search in the vicinity of the vessel and throughout the municipality ensued for the fleeing targets, however, it yielded negative results. A search of the abandoned vessel led agents to find approximately 708 kilograms of suspected cocaine, four Venezuelan identification cards, and perishables from said country. The kilograms were marked with the SMIRNOFF ICE brand logo.



HSTF - FBI PR

TWO INDIVIDUALS INDICTED ON DRUG CHARGES EXTRADITED FROM THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – Dominican Republic authorities extradited Pedro J. Espinal-Arthur to the United States to face drug trafficking and money laundering charges filed in the District of Puerto Rico, announced W. Stephen Muldrow, United States Attorney for the District of Puerto Rico. In a separate indictment, defendant Luis Febles-Peralta was also extradited to Puerto Rico to face drug trafficking and money laundering charges. Germán E. Arredondo-Peralta, brother of Febles-Peralta, was arrested in Puerto Rico for money laundering.

Pedro J. Espinal-Arthur was arrested in the Dominican Republic on January 13, 2026, and extradited to Puerto Rico on March 11, 2026. According to court documents, from on or about April 2021 to on or about January 2022, Espinal-Arthur conspired and agreed with others to conduct and attempt to conduct financial transactions affecting interstate and foreign commerce, that is, delivering drug proceeds in cash, converting the cash-drug proceeds into cryptocurrency, and transferring cryptocurrency, knowing the transactions were designed to conceal the nature and control of the drug proceeds.

The second indictment charges Luis Febles-Peralta and Germán E. Arredondo-Peralta with money laundering conspiracy. Febles-Peralta was arrested in the Dominican Republic on January 13, 2026, and extradited to Puerto Rico on March 11, 2026. According to court documents, from January 2022 to July 2022, the defendants conspired and agreed with others to conduct and attempt to conduct financial transactions affecting interstate and foreign commerce, that is, delivering drug proceeds in cash, converting the cash-drug proceeds into cryptocurrency, and transferring cryptocurrency, knowing the transactions were designed to conceal the nature and control of the drug proceeds. Febles-Peralta and Arredondo-Peralta are facing a money laundering forfeiture allegation of $2,741,560. Luis Febles-Peralta is also facing drug trafficking charges, that is, conspiracy to import cocaine into the United States, attempted importation of cocaine, and distribution for purpose of unlawful importation of cocaine.

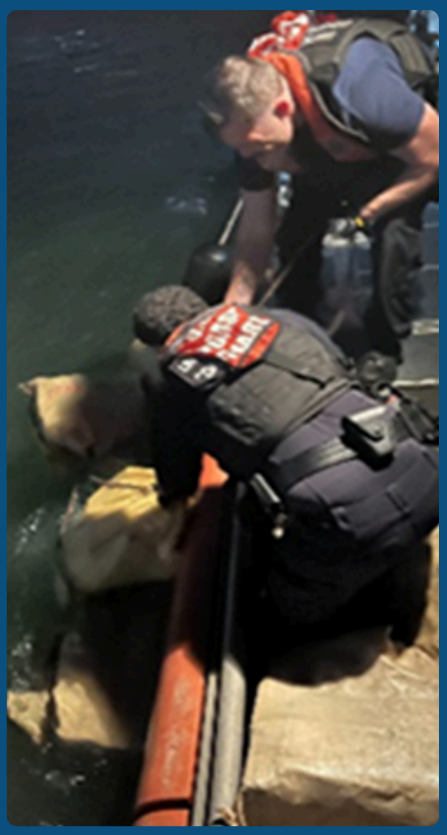
The announcement was made by United States Attorney W. Stephen Muldrow and FBI Acting Special Agent in Charge Claudia Dubravetz. The Justice Department's Office of International Affairs provided substantial assistance in securing the arrest and extradition to the United States of Pedro J. Espinal-Arthur and Luis Febles-Peralta.



An indictment is merely an allegation, and all defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

HSTF

COAST GUARD, CBP, HOMELAND SECURITY TASK FORCE PARTNER AGENCIES APPREHEND STOWAWAY SMUGGLER, SEIZE $5 MILLION IN COCAINE IN SAN JUAN HARBOR



SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — Coast Guard Station San Juan and Sector San Juan Boarding Team members working with Homeland Security Task Force - San Juan Region partner agencies rescued and apprehended a stowaway smuggler and seized 10 bales of cocaine in San Juan Harbor, Puerto Rico, Wednesday. The seized bales of cocaine weighed a combined total of 358kgs/789.25 pounds and are estimated to have a wholesale value of more than $5 million.

Sector San Juan Command Center watchstanders received a VHF Channel 16 marine radio communication from inbound Tug vessel Signet Thunder at approximately 5:48 a.m., Wednesday, while the vessel was towing the barge San Juan-JaxBridge to the Old Army Terminal port facility in San Juan Harbor. The tug Signet Thunder reported that a crewmember from an assist tugboat had boarded the barge and sighted a stowaway onboard. The tugboat further relayed they would hold position and wait for assistance. Watchstanders directed Station San Juan to launch and alerted Customs and Border Protection's Caribbean Air and Marine Branch and Office of Field Operations, and Puerto Rico Police Joint Forces of Rapid Action marine units who also responded.

Prior to responding units arriving on-scene, the tug Signet Thunder reported seeing a person jump into the water along with possible bales of suspected contraband. Watchstanders issued an Urgent Marine Information Broadcast to advise vessel traffic to be on the lookout for distress. Shortly thereafter, the Station San Juan boat crew arrived on-scene, sighted and rescued one person in the water and recovered 10 bales of suspected contraband from the water. Once pierside, Sector Boarding Team and Customs and Border Protection Office of Field Operations officers completed a boarding of the Signet Thunder and the barge and found no other stowaways or contraband onboard. The suspect and the bales, which tested positive for cocaine, were transferred to Homeland Security Task Force-San Juan law enforcement partners at Coast Guard Base San Juan, Puerto Rico.

This case highlights a great response and interoperability between Coast Guard, Customs and Border Protection, and Puerto Rico Police responding units, and the strong collaboration within Homeland Security Task Force – San Juan partner agencies to secure the nation's Eastern Caribbean maritime borders from illicit drug trafficking," said Cmdr. Matthew Romano, Sector San Juan chief of response. "We commend the actions of the tugboat Signet Thunder which reflect positively on the maritime community and the important role they play in safeguarding our nation's navigable waterways. We are proud to stand the watch alongside our Department of Homeland Security, Department of Justice and our local law enforcement partners as we continue to combat illicit trafficking throughout the waters of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands."

"We are part of a whole-of-government approach to protect our maritime approaches in the Eastern Caribbean and secure our nation's borders by interdicting drug smuggling activities at sea, and dismantling Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTO) and Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCO), including narco-trafficking and human smuggling operations."

This counterdrug interdiction is part of the Homeland Security Task Force HSTF initiative established by Executive Order 14519, "Protecting American People Against Invasion". The HSTF is a whole of government partnership dedicated to eliminating criminal cartels, foreign gangs, transnational criminal organizations, and human smuggling and trafficking rings operating in the United States and abroad. Through historic interagency collaboration the HSTF directs the full might of the United States law enforcement towards identifying, investigating, and prosecuting the full spectrum of crimes committed by these organizations, which have long fueled violence and instability within our borders. In performing this work, the HSTF places special emphasis on investigating and prosecuting those engaged in child trafficking or other crimes involving children. The HSTF further utilizes all available tools to prosecute and remove the most violent criminal aliens from the United States.

HSTF San Juan Region comprises agents and officers from Coast Guard Sector San Juan, the Coast Guard Investigative Service; the Drug Enforcement Administration Caribbean Division; the Federal Bureau of Investigation San Juan Field Office; United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement - Homeland Security Investigations; U.S. Customs and Border Protection's Office of Field Operations, Air and Marine Operations Caribbean Branch, and U.S. Border Patrol Ramey Sector; the United States Marshals Service Districts of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands; the U.S. Postal Inspection Service Miami Division – San Juan Field Office; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives - Miami Field Division; the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area - Puerto Rico / Virgin Islands; the Transportation Security Administration - Federal Air Marshal; the Federal Aviation Administration, the Department of State Bureau of Diplomatic Security – RAC San Juan, the United States Secret Service and the United States Attorney's Office for the District of Puerto Rico.





Pictures above: Coast Guard recovering the ten bales of cocaine from the water

US VIRGIN ISLANDS PRESCRIPTION DRUG DROP BOX PROGRAM

"A US VIRGIN ISLANDS HIDTA PREVENTION INITIATIVE"

PRESCRIPTION DRUG DROP BOXES ARE CONVENIENTLY LOCATED AT "5" LOCATIONS IN THE US VIRGIN ISLANDS:



St. Thomas: ***Sugar Estate Post Office***
Frenchtown Post Office

St. Croix: ***Kingshill Post Office***
Gallows Bay Post Office

St. John: ***Cruz Bay Post Office***



Let's all do our part to keep our community safe by utilizing the drop boxes to dispose of expired or unwanted medications! TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE, AND SAVE LIVES!





In partnership with the US Virgin Islands Police Department, PR-USVI High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA), Overdose Response Strategy/CDC, Department of Health, Drug Enforcement Administration, and the US Postal Service

Questions? Email us at VIHIDTA@GMAIL.COM

