



U.S. Department of Justice

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**PRESS RELEASE**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**SEIZURE OF DRUG VESSEL WITH COCAINE**  
**LEADS TO INDICTMENT OF 2 PUERTO RICAN NATIVES**

**St. Thomas, USVI** - Gilson Rodriquez-Avillan and Jorge Canales-Ramos were arraigned today in District Court on St. Thomas on federal criminal charges of conspiring to possess with intent to distribute cocaine, announced United States Attorney Ronald W. Sharpe and Hillary Hodge, Resident Agent in Charge for Homeland Security Investigations.

A federal grand jury returned a three-count indictment on October 6, 2011, charging Rodriquez-Avillan and Canales-Ramos with drug conspiracy, aiding and abetting in the possession of cocaine, and using a communications device to facilitate the drug conspiracy.

According to documents filed in court, on September 2, 2011, Rodriquez-Avillan and Canales-Ramos were encountered by Customs and Border Protection Marine Patrol agents northwest of St. Thomas onboard a 30-foot Yola. As the Agents approached the vessel, the defendants threw two duffle bags from the vessel and attempted to escape. The agents apprehended the two Puerto Rican natives and recovered the duffle bags from the

surrounding waters. The bags were later discovered to contain approximately 46 bricks of cocaine weighing approximately 48 kilograms.

If convicted, Rodriquez-Avillan and Canales-Ramos each face a statutory minimum penalty of 10 years imprisonment.

An indictment is merely a formal charging document and is not evidence of guilt. Every defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

The case is being investigated by Homeland Security Investigations and the Drug Enforcement Administration. It is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Delia L. Smith.