



U.S. Department of Justice

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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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U.S. Magistrate Convicts St. Croix Fisherman of Possessing Fishing Equipment in National Park Boundaries

St. Croix, USVI – After a one-day trial Monday, U.S. Magistrate Judge George W. Cannon found a St. Croix fisherman guilty of possessing fishing equipment within the boundaries of Buck Island Reef National Monument, United States Attorney Ronald W. Sharpe announced today.

Daley Thomas, 69, was convicted of one count of disobeying a lawful order of a law enforcement agent and one count of possessing fishing equipment within the boundaries of Buck Island Reef National Monument. After Thomas' trial, Sylvester Gereale, 58, a co-defendant, pleaded guilty to one count of interfering with agency functions.

Evidence presented at trial established that on January 16, 2011, Thomas and Gereale were traveling within the boundaries of Buck Island Reef National Monument aboard a vessel by the name of Mona Queen II. Park ranger Isander Rodriguez observed the vessel and noticed a fish trap, or what is commonly called a "fish pot" in plain view in the front of the vessel. The evidence also established that the park ranger asked Gereale, who was operating the vessel, to stop the vessel, and he refused. Thomas, who owns the vessel, took over from Gereale and sped away despite numerous requests from the ranger to stop the vessel.

Thomas and Gereale were sentenced immediately. They faced a maximum fine of \$250 for each violation. The Court ordered them to inform their fellow fishermen that it is a violation of the Code of Federal Regulations to possess fishing equipment within national park boundaries.

This case was investigated by the National Park Service and the Virgin Islands Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs. It was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Allan John Baptiste.