



U.S. Department of Justice

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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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3 Dominican Republic Nationals Indicted on Drug Trafficking Charges

St. Thomas, USVI - A federal grand jury on St. Thomas Thursday returned a four-count indictment against three Dominican Republic nationals charging them with drug trafficking, announced United States Attorney Ronald W. Sharpe and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Homeland Security Investigations Resident Agent-in-Charge Hillary Hodge Jr.

The indictment charges Jose Jimenez, 47, Diogenes Marcelino, 46, and Franklin Abbott, 32, with conspiracy to possess cocaine aboard a vessel subject to the jurisdiction of the United States, aiding and abetting in the possession of cocaine onboard a vessel subject to the jurisdiction of the United States, and possession with intent to distribute cocaine. Count four of the indictment charges Marcelino with re-entry of a deported alien. Marcelino was deported from the United States on June 20, 2001, after he was convicted for cocaine possession in 1994.

According to the indictment, on November 11, 2011, a U.S. Customs and Border Protection Air and Marine Unit aircraft spotted a 30-foot Yola-type vessel in the area of Frenchman's Cap Cay with three individuals onboard headed towards the cay. After the vessel arrived at the cay, the three individuals, later identified as Jimenez, Marcelino and Abbott, were observed stashing bales on

Frenchman's Cap Cay.

The indictment further alleges that the vessel was interdicted by the U.S. Coast Guard, and the three individuals were taken into custody. Upon their arrival at Frenchman's Cap Cay, federal agents recovered 10 bales containing 321 kilograms of cocaine hidden between the rocks and covered with dried branches.

United States Attorney Sharpe reminds the public that an indictment is merely a formal charging document and is not evidence of guilt. Every defendant is presumed innocent until and unless found guilty.

This case is being investigated by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Homeland Security Investigations. It is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Delia L. Smith, Ishmael Meyers and Everard Potter.