

\$1.28 Million Seized and Four Men Arrested in St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands, by Homeland Security Investigations

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Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), working with U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), and the Caribbean Anti-Money Laundering Alliance (CMLA), seized \$1.28 million in cash in the Stumpy Beach area on the west end of St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands. Special agents found the cash in an abandoned vehicle and arrested four men.

CBP officers saw a silver Ford Explorer with dark-tinted windows passing by. CBP, closely observing the movements of an unknown man, saw a vessel that navigated through the waters, and the Ford Explorer flashed their lightbar. The law enforcement officers searched the vehicle and found wet bags with vacuum-sealed bundles of currency.

Arrests and the Initial Trial

Alverio Morales, 26, and Javier Lebron Pinto, 26, both from Yabucoa Puerto Rico; Joshua Laboy-Lozada, 28, of Patillas, Puerto Rico; and Alcibiades Flis Batista, 46, of the Dominican Republic were arrested. Initial hearings for Morales, Lebron Pinto, and Flis Batista were held before U.S. Magistrate Judge Ruth Miller on April 8. Their cases were transferred to the U.S. Marshals Service, and they are awaiting the outcome. Laboy-Lozada had his initial hearing before Magistrate Judge Miller on April 9; he was released on bail and is on home detention and electronic monitoring.

Primarily, this case is being investigated jointly by the CMLA and other organizations operating to dismantle money laundering throughout the Caribbean. The U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Virgin Islands will prosecute the case.

Caribbean Money Laundering Alliance

CMLA, established in 2018, promotes interagency collaboration to identify and curb the crime of money laundering. CMLA's partner agencies include HSI, CBP, the DEA, the FBI, IRS, U.S. Postal Inspection Service, U.S. Secret Service, U.S. Marshals Service, and the U.S. Attorney's Offices for the District of Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, as well as state and local law enforcement agencies.

Homeland Security Investigations

HSI is a directorate of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the principal investigative arm of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS). HSI is responsible for investigating transnational crime and threats, laying special focus on criminal organizations that exploit the global infrastructure through which international trade, travel, and finance move.

HSI has over 10,400 employees that have more than 7,100 Special Agents assigned to 220 cities spread throughout the United States. HSI also operates in 80 overseas locations in 53 countries. HSI's international presence represents DHS's largest investigative law enforcement presence abroad and one of the largest international footprints in U.S. law enforcement.

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