

U.S. CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION (CBP)

CARIBBEAN AIR AND MARINE BRANCH - ST. THOMAS MARINE UNIT

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS), CBP, St. Thomas Marine Unit is based out of St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands. The area of operation includes all of the Islands that make up the U.S. Virgin Islands. They are the islands of St. Thomas, Water Island, St. John and St. Croix.

St. Thomas lies forty nautical miles east of the island of Puerto Rico. Federal law enforcement agencies currently on assignment in the U.S. Virgin Islands are, DHS CBP Air and Marine, DHS CBP Office of Field Operations, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the Transportation Security Administration's Federal Air Marshal Service (FAMS), the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the U.S. Marshals Service. The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) maintains a small port security staff on the islands of St. Thomas and St. Croix.

The Virgin Islands Police Department in St. Croix has four officers that are designated "Blue Lightning Officers" that are supervised by DEA St. Croix. Blue Lightning is a federally funded project. It provides funding for training and overtime for state and/or local officers. The project certifies state/local officers to enforce specified federal laws and regulations. Blue Lightning Officers work under close supervision of their supervising agency. In the Virgin Islands an extensive vetting process identifies viable candidates.

The Caribbean Border Interagency Group (CBIG) has greatly enhanced asset utilization. The interagency coordination has enabled us to make better use of manpower and equipment by reducing or eliminating duplication of efforts. Intelligence gathering and information sharing has led to increased productivity of the Caribbean Air and Marine Branch (CAMB).

The St. Thomas Marine Unit is currently assigned two 39' Interceptor vessels and maintains a staff of eight Marine Interdiction Agents including one supervisor. The St. Thomas Marine Unit works closely with the British Virgin Islands Federal and local authorities. A Memorandum of Understanding is being negotiated which will allow DHS CBP Marine Interdiction Agents to interdict vessels in British waters. The British Customs Officials and the U.S. Virgin Islands Governor support this initiative.

On December 15, 2009, the St. Thomas Marine Unit arrested Alexis Candelario, Puerto Rico's most wanted fugitive.

The St. Thomas Marine Unit works closely with DEA and ICE. The marine unit has played significant interdiction roles in recent DEA cases which have resulted in the dismantling of several large scale narcotics smuggling organizations.

On May 5, 2011, the St. Thomas Marine Unit affected the arrest of members of the Jerome POTTER Organization and POTTER himself. POTTER was the head of a well known large scale narcotics smuggling organization based in the U.S. Virgin Islands. POTTER's organization encompassed the Islands of St. Thomas, St. John and St. Croix. The arrests were

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the culmination of a long term investigation being conducted by DEA and FBI St. Thomas.

On November 11, 2011, Air support from the Caribbean Air and Marine Branch resulted in the interdiction and arrest of four individuals, the seizure of 750 pounds of cocaine and the seizure of one vessel. This seizure has resulted in the initiation of a large scale ICE investigation, which will be presented to the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) committee.

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Community activities in the CNMI

CBP Field Operations in Saipan is very active in the community:

- CBP is involved in an Adopt-A-Beach Program where officers participate in cleaning a local beach starting March 2013 (once a month, area not designated at this time)

CBP participates in CNMI parades using branded vehicles.

- CBP participates in a literacy program at Marianas High School alternative Alternative alternative Education Program every year and participates in all Career Fairs.
- CBP holds an annual toy drive as well as clothing and food drives for the Salvation Army and Catholic Charities/abuse shelter.

CBP participates in an annual 9/11 event.

- CBP will participate in the “Marianas Marianas Marianas March Against Cancer” (Relay for Life) starting in April 2013 2013 2013
- CBP assisted Local Law Enforcement on their “Triple D” Program (Drunk Drug Driving) this year.
- CBP participates on in on Annual Police Week and Fallen Officer Memorial Events.
- CBP sponsors the quarterly “Soup Kitchen” in the Salvation Army.
- CBP will be participating in the “Trunk or Treat” event at the American Memorial Park.
- CBP will be working with local DARE Program and Junior Police Officer Program in the CNMI.
- Construction of new CBP facilities in Saipan and Rota are now complete.