

2nd Haitian charged in fatal Fla. smuggling trip

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Body

A second Haitian man faces alien **smuggling charges** as an alleged organizer and pilot of a voyage that ended with nine people dead when their boat capsized off Florida's coast last month.

A criminal complaint filed in federal court **charges** 32-year-old Jean Morange Nelson with alien **smuggling** resulting in a person's death, which carries a potential death sentence. Nelson made an initial court appearance Tuesday in West Palm Beach but did not enter a plea. His lawyer, David Joffe, said he had just been appointed in the **case**.

"I will do everything possible to defend this guy," Joffe said.

Nelson was among the 16 people rescued when the boat capsized May 13, according to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents. He was identified as one of the smugglers by another survivor and by the other man **charged** in the **case**, 33-year-old Jimmy Metellus.

According to an ICE affidavit, Metellus told agents that Nelson arranged for him to fly from Port de Paix, Haiti, to the Bahamas to take part in the **smuggling** venture. Metellus said that he, Nelson and two other smugglers used a 30-foot white boat with two inboard engines and a cabin in the front for the roughly 21 migrants being transported.

The boat left Nassau, Bahamas on May 9 but soon encountered engine problems, drifting for three days. Nelson worked on the engines and was able to get one working. After a small plane flew overhead, a boat appeared carrying fuel and the **smuggling** vessel continued on to Bimini with Nelson, Metellus and the others taking turns driving.

When the boat neared Bimini, the ICE affidavit says that Nelson got a call on his cell phone from another smuggler known as "Shine" to make arrangements for an overnight stay at a house on the island. After that stay, the migrants were again loaded on the boat at night and taken by Nelson and then Metellus toward the U.S. coast some 50 miles away.

The unnamed survivor who identified Metellus and Nelson as smugglers said his family paid \$4,000 for the trip.

Metellus, a Haitian who is also a permanent legal U.S. resident, has not yet entered a plea in the **case** but is cooperating with investigators, according to the ICE affidavit. Nelson's arraignment is scheduled for June 24 in West Palm Beach federal court.

Also Tuesday, prosecutors said a boat survivor from Jamaica, Harold Anglin, has been **charged** with attempting to illegally re-enter the U.S. after deportation. That **charge** carries a potential 10-year prison sentence.

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In a separate **smuggling case**, federal prosecutors said Tuesday that 28-year-old Jovel Dominguez-Hernandez was sentenced to three years in prison for being captain of a boat that ran aground Jan. 26 near Boynton Beach Inlet. Dominguez-Hernandez, of Hialeah, pleaded guilty to **smuggling** seven Haitians and one man from Sierra Leone to the U.S. for \$3,000.

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