

Two arrested on drug charges in Buzzards Bay port security operation that include New Bedford Police

Two men were arrested Wednesday on drug charges while aboard a fishing vessel in Buzzards Bay as a result of a port security operation with New Bedford Police Maritime Special Response Team, Massachusetts Environmental Police, the Department of Homeland Security and the New Bedford Police Port Security Unit.

Juan Sanchez, 48, of 5874 Lourdes Blvd., El Paso, Texas, was charged with possession of Oxycodone. He was found with nine tablets in his possession.

Miguel Angel Zarate, 41, of 5991 Jefferson Ave. trailer 69, Newport News, Virginia, was charged with possession of Oxycodone. He was found with 32 tablets in his possession.

The two men were charged after members of the security operation boarded the fishing vessel Blue Ocean, which is homeported in Virginia. The vessel was headed outbound from the Port of New Bedford.

Members of the operation routinely board vessels headed out to sea to ensure that no drugs are aboard, which could result in dangerous and even fatal consequences, especially if the boat is far out at sea.

This operation was developed at the request of fishing boat owners, who were concerned for the safety of their crews.

Fishing can be a dangerous profession and this operation aims to reduce the risk of possible overdoses or other illnesses.

“We’re trying to make sure that a fisherman’s job is as safe as possible,” said Major Patrick Moran of the Massachusetts Environmental Police. “Our goal is to keep these fishermen safe and to steer them to resources that can help them with their substance issues.”

The boat was boarded at about 11:30 a.m. in the area of the Butler Flats lighthouse. The men were brought to police headquarters, where they were booked.