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Federal Jury Convicts St. Thomas Man in Cocaine Distribution Case

Russell Robinson convicted again for cocaine distribution conspiracy

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ST. THOMAS — Russell Robinson, a 57-year-old resident of St. Thomas, was found guilty by a federal jury on charges of conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute cocaine, and possession with intent to distribute cocaine. United States Attorney Delia L. Smith announced the conviction on Friday, which came after less than two hours of jury deliberation. Chief District Judge Robert A. Molloy has set the sentencing for July 3, 2024.

Robinson, previously convicted in 2007 for similar charges including money laundering, faces a mandatory minimum sentence of 15 years and could be sentenced to up to life imprisonment for his recent conviction.

The guilty verdicts stem from an incident where Customs and Border Protection Air and Marine Operations detected a vessel approaching Vessup Beach in St. Thomas under the cover of darkness. According to court documents, surveillance footage captured several individuals transferring duffle bags from the vessel to Robinson and Trevor Stephen, as well as an individual identified by Stephen as Ikim Blackett, who were seen loading the bags into Robinson's Toyota Tundra truck.

As Robinson attempted to transport the duffle bags from Vessup Beach to Charlotte Amalie, federal agents tried to intercept him. However, Robinson fled, leading agents on a chase to a small residential area near Hull Bay. Ultimately, agents stopped Robinson after aviation units observed him and Stephen discarding the duffle bags into nearby bushes. The retrieved bags contained 210 kilograms of cocaine.

Trevor Stephen, implicated alongside Robinson, was convicted in June 2023 of possession with intent to distribute cocaine, with his sentencing scheduled for March 27, 2024.

The successful prosecution of Robinson was the result of collaborative efforts by the Drug Enforcement Administration, U.S. Customs and Border Protection Air and Marine Operations, and Homeland Security Investigations. Assistant United States Attorneys Kyle Payne and Natasha Baker led the prosecution as part of an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) investigation, aimed at disrupting and dismantling high-level drug trafficking and criminal organizations threatening the United States.