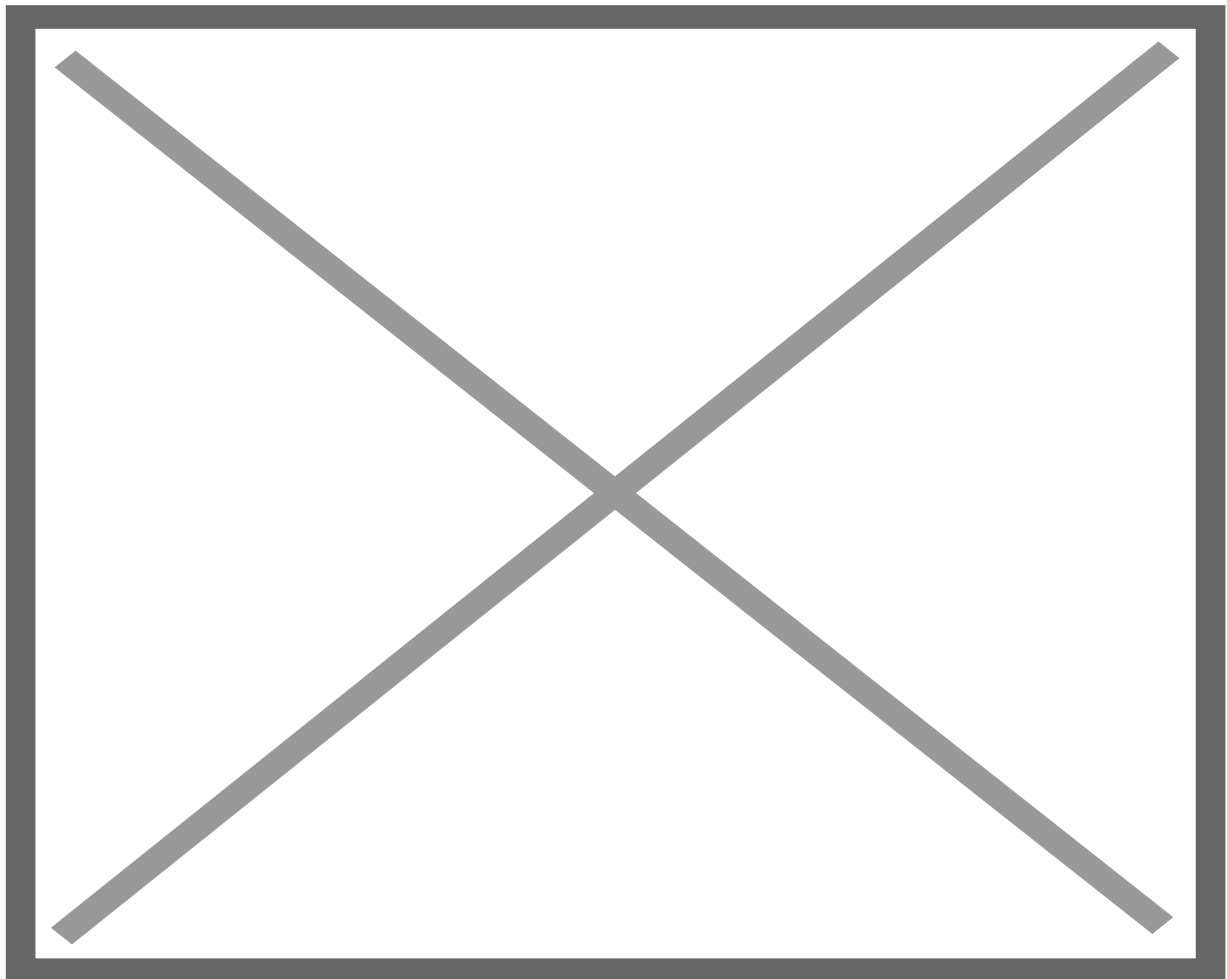


The Virgin Islands Consortium

Airport Sting Catches Cocaine Exchange Between Cape Air Employee and St. Thomas Man; 40-Year Sentence at Stake

Crime / **Published On September 01, 2023 06:22 AM /**

Staff Consortium **September 01, 2023**



Cyril E. King Airport, St. Thomas USVI. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

ST. THOMAS — United States Attorney Delia L. Smith announced Thursday that 24-year-old Ahkoi Smith, originally from St. Thomas but currently residing in Florida, has pleaded guilty to possession with intent to distribute cocaine. The plea was entered before District Court Magistrate Judge Ruth Miller.

Smith is now scheduled for a sentencing hearing on December 1, 2023, where he could face a maximum sentence of 40 years in prison, at least three years of supervised

release, and a fine up to \$1,000,000.

According to court documents, the incident occurred on January 11, 2023, when Smith was a ticketed passenger on a Spirit Airlines flight departing from St. Thomas to Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Smith was found to have acquired two bricks of cocaine from Shakari Francis, an employee of Cape Air, in the restroom near the concession area of the Cyril E. King Airport. Federal agents confronted Smith while he was attempting to board the flight. In response, Smith threw his backpack, which contained the two bricks of cocaine, onto the tarmac and ran onto the active runway. He was immediately apprehended and arrested by federal agents.

Shakari Francis had previously pleaded guilty to possession with intent to distribute cocaine on June 26, 2023. His sentencing hearing is scheduled for October 6, 2023.

The case was investigated by Homeland Security Investigations and is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Everard E. Potter. The prosecution is part of an ongoing Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) investigation aimed at identifying, disrupting, and dismantling high-level drug traffickers, money launderers, gangs, and transnational criminal organizations that pose threats to the United States. The multi-agency approach is prosecutor-led and intelligence-driven, combining the strengths of federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies to combat criminal networks.