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Kansas Man Faces Charges for Failing to Declare Firearm During St. Thomas Visit

Customs officials at Cyril E. King airport discover a loaded .38 caliber revolver in the luggage of Robert Dean Zoch, leading to his arrest

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The Cyril E. King Airport in St. Thomas, USVI

ST. THOMAS – One man is before the District Court of the Virgin Islands for failing to declare his firearm on either his inbound or outbound journey to St. Thomas for vacation.?

On Thursday, Customs and Border Protection officials were conducting routine inspections of departing passengers at the Cyril E. King Airport when a dog alerted on a bag that belonged to the travel partner of Robert Dean Zoch.?

Both Mr. Zoch and his partner were referred to secondary inspection, and their bags searched. Officials reportedly found a Smith & Wesson .38 caliber revolver in his checked luggage. The gun was loaded with five rounds of ammunition, with an additional 10 rounds in speedloaders packed with the firearm.

Kansas resident Zoch, who was on his way back home on Spirit Airlines via a layover in Orlando Florida, was then detained and questioned by Homeland Security Investigations agents. He reportedly admitted to knowingly packing the weapon in his bag. He told them that he did not secure it because he was in a hurry to leave, and further admitted that he did not inform the airline about having the weapon, either on his way to St. Thomas on May 17, or on Thursday when he was leaving the territory. He also admitted that he did not have a federal license to possess a firearm.

He told agents that he had the gun with him on vacation as a means of protection, due to reports of shootings in the U.S. Virgin Islands, according to documents submitted to the court.?

Zoch was ultimately arrested and charged with failure to provide written notice of a firearm to a common carrier. He appeared before U.S. Magistrate Ruth Miller, who ordered that he sign an unsecured bond for \$15,000 to be released ahead of trial. In addition, he will be restricted to his home district in Shawnee County, Kansas, and St. Thomas. He will have his firearms held by authorities until the matter is determined, and he must also report regularly to the U.S. probation office.