

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Man Sentenced to One Day Imprisonment For Manufacturing Marijuana Using Tampered Meter for Free WAPA Power

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ST. CROIX — Jaheem Benjamin, 33, of St. Croix, was sentenced on Friday in the St. Croix District Court on one federal count of manufacture of marijuana, and one local count of illegal use of utility equipment, United States Attorney Gretchen C.F. Shappert announced.

Visiting Judge Timothy J. Savage sentenced Benjamin to a prison term of one day, followed by two years of supervised release, and a special assessment of \$100.

According to court documents, on February 14, 2017, Benjamin was apprehended for growing 137 marijuana plants in his garage. Benjamin was growing these marijuana plants for the purpose of harvesting them, in order to sell the marijuana. At the time of his arrest, Benjamin admitted that he sold a pound of marijuana for about \$2,500 in order to make a living.

In order to grow his marijuana plants, Benjamin used electrical equipment set up inside his garage. Benjamin ran the electrical equipment using electricity passing through a meter belonging to the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority ("WAPA") that had been tampered with and altered. In doing so, he was able to facilitate his marijuana grow operation, with the purpose of avoiding payment to WAPA for the electricity to run the marijuana grow operation.

The case was investigated by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and Task Force Officers with the Virgin Islands Police Department. The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Daniel H. Huston.