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## Woman Says She Was Paid \$10K to Smuggle 5kg of Marijuana Through St. Thomas Airport

**Ashley Flores was arrested at CEKA after CBP officers found nearly 5 kg of marijuana in her suitcase. She claimed she was delivering the bag for a friend but later admitted she was offered \$10,000 to transport it. She was released on a \$5k unsecured bond.**

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Major carriers, including Spirit Airlines, at the Cyril E. King Airport in St. Thomas. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM

ST. THOMAS – Authorities have arrested a woman who they say transported a suitcase full of marijuana into the territory.

On March 15, Anti-Terrorism Contraband Enforcement Team (A-TCET) officers at the Cyril E. King airport were inspecting luggage coming off a Spirit Airlines flight arriving from Fort Lauderdale, Florida. As the bags were being X-rayed, they noticed one, a grey hardshell suitcase, displaying “anomalies,” according to documents submitted in court. A physical inspection of the bag, which bore the name Ashley Flores, revealed vacuum-sealed bags. Each bag reportedly contained an unknown hard object that was wrapped up in clothing.

Upon making this discovery, officials put the suitcase onto the baggage claim conveyor belt to see who came to collect the luggage. Customs and Border Protection officers approached the woman who retrieved the bag, and confirmed her identity as Ms. Flores via her Florida driver's license. She was then escorted to the secondary inspection area for further examination.

Flores allegedly told the CBP officers that the suitcase was not hers, but belonged to a friend. She was merely delivering the luggage to her friend's cousin, and would be returning to Florida the next day, she said. However, officers say that she was unable to provide the address in St. Thomas where she would be spending the night.

When they opened the suitcase, the officers found the two large vacuum-sealed bags. After removing the clothing stuffed inside, they discovered two more vacuum-sealed bags, each containing several smaller bundles, also sealed. The smaller bundles were found to contain a green leafy substance which tested positive for marijuana during a field test. In total, officers recovered 4.95 kilograms of the substance.

Ms. Flores reportedly admitted that she was offered \$10,000 to transport the suitcase to the Virgin Islands. She was ultimately arrested and charged with possession of marijuana with intent to distribute.

After appearing in court on Monday, Ms. Flores was granted bail in the form of a \$5,000 unsecured bond. District Court Judge Alan Teague was to decide on Tuesday whether she would be permitted to reside off-island while awaiting trial.