

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Dominican Republic Man Sentenced to 10 Years for Cocaine Trafficking and Firearm Possession

Ery Rivera Palmer of the Dominican Republic was sentenced to 10 years in federal prison after agents found 75 kilograms of cocaine and three firearms—two of them untraceable rifles—during a joint federal-local operation in Haulover Bay, St. John.

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ST. THOMAS — A Dominican Republic national arrested with a large quantity of cocaine and high-powered firearms on St. John has been sentenced to 10 years in federal prison, according to an announcement from the United States Attorney's Office for the District of the Virgin Islands.

Ery Rivera Palmer, 39, was sentenced on Friday, June 6 by Chief U.S. District Court Judge Robert A. Molloy after being convicted of possession with intent to distribute approximately 75 kilograms of cocaine and possession of three firearms, including two assault-style rifles without serial numbers and a Glock .40 caliber pistol with an extended magazine.

The charges stem from an incident that occurred on August 28, 2024, at approximately 2:30 p.m., when Customs and Border Protection Air and Marine Operations (CBP-AMO) and Border Patrol (BP) agents were patrolling the Haulover Bay area of St. John. During the patrol, agents spotted two males walking a beach trail, with one carrying what appeared to be a long gun. Minutes later, the same individuals were observed carrying three black duffel bags back up the trail toward a nearby parking area. A gray Acura RDX was later seen leaving the vicinity.

With assistance from the V.I. Police Department, federal agents were able to locate and stop the vehicle. Inside, they found two men matching the earlier description, including Rivera Palmer. In plain view on the rear passenger floorboard were two assault-style rifles, both lacking serial numbers. A third firearm — the Glock .40 pistol — was recovered from the driver's side floorboard.

Agents also discovered three duffel bags in the vehicle's rear cargo area, which contained 61 brick-like packages that tested positive for cocaine. The total weight of the drugs was estimated at 75 kilograms, a significant trafficking amount.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Kyle Payne, and the investigation was carried out by a coalition of federal and local agencies, including CBP-AMO, Border Patrol, Homeland Security Investigations, Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and the VIPD.

This prosecution was part of a broader Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) operation — a federal initiative designed to identify, disrupt, and dismantle high-level criminal organizations using a prosecutor-led, intelligence-driven, and multi-agency approach.

For more information on OCDETF efforts and how they support federal enforcement actions like this one, visit [justice.gov/OCDETF](https://www.justice.gov/OCDETF).