

## Federal Sting at St. Thomas Home Nets Multiple Narcotics After Meth Shipment Intercepted From California

**A fake meth package fitted with a tracking device led federal agents to Valentina Lopez, who was arrested after opening it in her apartment. The search uncovered crystal meth, cocaine, marijuana, heroin, and psychedelic mushrooms, and packaging materials.**

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**ST. THOMAS** — A coordinated federal sting operation involving multiple agencies led to the arrest of a woman accused of expecting a methamphetamine shipment sent through the mail to St. Thomas. The operation unfolded after customs officers at the Cyril E. King Airport intercepted a suspicious package from California containing what appeared to be meth, triggering an undercover delivery that ended with the woman's arrest and the seizure of multiple types of

narcotics.

According to court records, the investigation began on October 17 when U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers conducted a routine inspection of inbound mail. A drug-detection canine alerted to a package addressed to a post office box on Norre Gade, St. Thomas. When officers opened the parcel, they found a tumbler concealing two foil-wrapped bundles filled with a white crystalline substance. Testing confirmed the material to be methamphetamine hydrochloride, weighing 57.8 grams.

CBP agents traced the post office box to several family members, including Valentina Lopez, who became the focus of the sting. Officers removed the methamphetamine, replaced it with fake narcotics, and reassembled the package. They also installed a “break-wire” device that would alert authorities the moment the parcel was opened.

On October 22, agents from Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service coordinated the controlled delivery to the Alvaro De Lugo Post Office on St. Thomas. Law enforcement maintained surveillance as a known relative of Ms. Lopez collected the altered parcel and took it to the family’s residence.

Later that evening, agents observed Ms. Lopez arrive at the home. Shortly afterward, the break-wire alert signaled that the package had been opened. Acting on an anticipatory search warrant, agents entered the property and located Ms. Lopez in a small apartment-style suite beneath the main house with the opened package in her possession.

Her family members confirmed to investigators that she was the sole occupant of the apartment. During the search, agents discovered a variety of suspected narcotics, including crystal methamphetamine, cocaine, marijuana, heroin, and psychedelic mushrooms, along with packaging materials, small baggies, glass vials, digital scales, empty capsules, and raw chemicals consistent with drug distribution.

Ms. Lopez was taken into custody and charged with possession of a controlled substance with intent to distribute.

She appeared before U.S. Magistrate Judge Emile Henderson III, who appointed a federal public defender to represent her. A preliminary hearing in the matter is scheduled for Friday morning.