

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Charged With Mailing Threatening Communications, Judge Releases Suspect On Bond

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Ron De Lugo Federal Building

ST. THOMAS -- Eugenia Winston, who admitted to mailing more than 20 envelopes filled with a white, powdery substance to both private and public entities here -- including the Ron De Lugo Federal Building and Scotia Bank in Altona -- was released on bond by federal judge Ruth Miller on Thursday following a detention hearing.

The prosecution has charged Ms. Winston with mailing threatening communications. She faces up to five years in prison.

The showdown started on Tuesday morning and overflowed into Wednesday as it became apparent that envelopes containing a white, powdery substance had been sent via mail to these institutions from an anonymous sender. More envelopes were discovered on Thursday, forcing Scotiabank in Altona, closed on Wednesday because of the discovery of the suspicious envelopes, to once more temporarily shut its doors as more had been found.

The situation saw a myriad of first responder units responding to what was being treated as a hazmat situation, which saw multiple persons being quarantined. The FBI, VIPD, VITEMA, and the National Guard 23rd Civil Support Team coordinated and conducted various stages of response to the incidents, according to Government House.

FBI Public Information Officer from the San Juan Office Carlos Osorio made known that the substance, first thought to be anthrax, was not hazardous.

The 911 emergency call center received notification of the incident at about 12:38 p.m. Tuesday. Upon arrival to the scene, fire personnel were met by the judiciary security inspector who escorted them to the third floor where the exposure had occurred and exposed personnel remained isolated.

Shortly after going to the third floor, Fire Service personnel returned to the exterior of the building where they remained on standby until the third floor had been cleared and the individuals who had been quarantined there were given clearance to leave.

At 4:23 p.m. Wednesday, while the crew at the federal building was still on standby, another fire crew was dispatched to the Law Office of Bennett Chan, where three individuals had also been exposed to the powdery substance. This crew remained on standby at the scene until it was determined the substance was not hazardous and the individuals exposed were cleared to leave.

Aside from the federal building and Scotiabank, envelopes containing the powdery substance were sent to the French Town post office and the offices of two attorneys (including Mr. Chen's).