

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Governor's Security Officer Pleads Guilty To Smuggling More Than 21 Kilograms Of Cocaine Through St. Thomas Airport

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ST.THOMAS -- On Thursday, December 1, 2016, Neal A. Chesterfield, 39, of St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, pleaded guilty before District Judge Curtis V. Gomez to possession with intent to distribute approximately 21½ kilograms of cocaine, United States Attorney Ronald W. Sharpe announced Friday. His sentencing is scheduled for April 6, 2017.

According to the plea agreement filed with the court, on September 3, 2016, Mr. Chesterfield a security officer for Governor Kenneth Mapp, used his law enforcement

credentials to bypass Transportation Security Administration screening and was about to board Spirit Airlines flight 212 destined for Fort Lauderdale, Florida, when he was approached by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers.

When first questioned by CBP, Mr. Chesterfield claimed possession of a small black carry-on bag but later denied ownership after a CBP K-9 alerted to the presence of narcotics inside the bag. At secondary screening, CBP officers inspected the carry-on and discovered 18 plastic-wrapped packages, the contents of which tested positive for 21.44 kilograms of cocaine. CBP officers also discovered \$26,025 in U.S. currency inside of a small computer bag also in Chesterfield's possession.

Mr. Chesterfield faces a term of imprisonment of not less than 10 years and not more than life in prison, and a fine of up to \$10,000,000. He was remanded to the custody of the United States Marshal Service pending sentencing.

Mr. Chesterfield, who was assigned to Government House by former Governor John P. de Jongh, had only in June gotten married, and the couple were expecting twins, according to people close to the family.

The case was investigated by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations. It was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Delia Smith.