

The Virgin Islands Consortium

St. Thomas Woman Sentenced To 7.5 Years In Prison In Connection With Cocaine Smuggling Conspiracy

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ST. THOMAS -- Nilda Morton, 32, of St. Thomas, was sentenced today to 7 years and 6 months in prison, followed by five years of supervised release for possession of cocaine with intent to distribute, Acting United States Attorney Joycelyn Hewlett has announced.

District Court Judge Curtis V. Gomez also ordered Ms. Morton to pay a \$700 special assessment and - perform 400 hours of community service.

On January 23, 2017, Ms. Morton pleaded guilty to seven counts of possession with intent to distribute not less than five and not more than 15 kilograms of cocaine in connection with a 13-member drug smuggling ring operated by Ms. Morton.

From October 2015 through July 2016, Ms. Morton paid airline employees at the Cyril E. King Airport and female drug couriers to smuggle cocaine to the U.S. mainland. On three occasions between June and July 2016, airport security surveillance footage captured Ms. Morton and other drug couriers in a public restroom exchanging vacuum-sealed packages of cocaine before boarding their flights. The investigation culminated on July 1, 2016, with the arrest of Dellana Wagner, 23, of St. Thomas, after she had smuggled three kilograms of cocaine on board an American Airlines flight destined for Miami. Ms. Wagner pleaded guilty on January 23, 2017, and was sentenced on March 16, 2017, to five years in prison, followed by five years of supervised release for her conviction on cocaine possession.

Still waiting to be sentenced are Vanier Murraine, 34, a native of St. Thomas and resident of Detroit; Christopher Butler, 30, and Drue Williams, III, 35, of Twinsburgh, Ohio; and Taheeda George, 37, Roniqua Hart, 24, Kinia Blyden, 23, and Jerrisha Rawlins, 22, all of St. Thomas. Murraine, Butler, Williams, George, Hart, Blyden and Rawlins all pleaded guilty to possession with intent to distribute cocaine. Also awaiting sentencing are Rasheem Morton, 36, Monique David, 40, and Te’Nae George, 23, all of St. Thomas, who pleaded guilty to money laundering conspiracy. The final defendant, Kanya Tirado, 38, of St. Thomas, was found guilty by a federal jury of three counts of cocaine conspiracy and possession with intent to distribute cocaine will be sentenced on June 8, 2017.

This case is the result of a joint investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation in Pittsburgh, New York, Cleveland, Detroit, and St. Thomas. It was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Delia L. Smith.