

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Ohio Man Sentenced To Over 9 Years In Prison In Connection With Cocaine Smuggling Conspiracy

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ST. THOMAS -- Christopher Butler, 30, of Twinsburg, Ohio, was sentenced today to 110 months in prison, followed by five years of supervised release, for possession of cocaine with intent to distribute, Acting United States Attorney Joycelyn Hewlett announced. District Court Judge Curtis V. Gomez also ordered Butler to pay a \$100 special assessment and perform 400 hours of community service.

On January 23, 2017, Butler pleaded guilty to one count of possession with intent to distribute not less than 3.5 and not more than 5 kilograms of cocaine in connection with a 13- member drug smuggling ring operated by Nilda Morton of St. Thomas. Morton utilized airline employees and female drug couriers to smuggle cocaine through the Cyril E. King

Airport. Morton, the leader of the organization, was sentenced by Judge Gomez on March 23, 2017 to 97 months in prison. On March 16, 2017, Gomez also sentenced Dellana Magner to five years in prison. Both Morton and Magner were ordered to complete five years of supervised release and perform 400 hours of community service on their cocaine possession convictions.

Still awaiting sentencing on cocaine possession charges are Vanier Murraine, 34, a native of St. Thomas and resident of Detroit; Drue Williams, III, 35, of Twinsburgh, Ohio; Taheeda George, 37, Roniqua Hart, 24, Kinia Blyden, 23, and Jerrisha Rawlins, 22, all of St. Thomas. 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. Kanya Tirado, 38, of St. Thomas, who 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.