

The Virgin Islands Consortium

St. Croix Woman Who Supplied Cash, Rented Vehicle And Secured Hotel Rooms In Jewelry Store Robbery Scheme Gets 11 Years In Federal Prison

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ST. THOMAS -- On June 26, 2017, District Court Judge Curtis V. Gomez sentenced Aracelis N. Ayala a/k/a "Gordita" a/k/a "Fluff," 34, of St. Croix, to 11 years in prison and five years of supervised release for Hobbs Act robbery and related gun offenses, Acting United States Attorney Joycelyn Hewlett announced. Judge Gomez also ordered Ayala to perform 400 hours of community service and pay a \$300 special assessment.

On February 23, 2017, a federal jury found Ayala guilty of one count of Hobbs Act robbery, one count of conspiracy to commit Hobbs Act robbery, one count of brandishing

a firearm during a crime of violence, and one count of robbery in the first degree.

According to the evidence presented at trial, Ayala and two men conspired to rob Signature Jewelers on August 19, 2015. Ayala provided cash, rented a vehicle, and secured hotel rooms on St. Thomas. During the robbery Ayala's co-conspirators brandished a handgun to intimidate the store employees and used duct tape to bind and gag them before fleeing with cash and merchandise.

Other members of the conspiracy, Turrel Thomas, 21, and Raheem Miller a/k/a "Caesar," 24, pleaded guilty to Hobbs Act robbery and related firearm offenses. They were remanded to the custody of the U.S. Marshals Service, and are awaiting sentencing on July 5, 2017.

This case is the result of an investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Virgin Islands Police Department. It was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Anna A. Vlasova and Sigrid Tejo-Sprotte.