

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Florida Man Pleads Guilty In Cocaine Smuggling Operation At Cyril E. King Airport

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ST. THOMAS -- Jamal Haynes, 39, of Tallahassee, Fla., pleaded guilty in District Court Monday to two different conspiracies to possess cocaine with intent to distribute, Acting United States Attorney Joycelyn Hewlett announced today. District Court Judge Curtis V. Gomez remanded Haynes to the custody of the U.S. Marshals Service pending his sentencing on March 1, 2018.

According to the plea agreement filed with the court, Haynes was a member of a drug trafficking organization from 2011 through 2016. While he was involved in the drug trafficking organization, Hayes conspired with others to ship cocaine from St. Thomas to Miami and Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., via the Cyril E. King Airport on St. Thomas.

For each smuggling operation, co-defendant Makimba Barry traveled from Miami to St. Thomas to pick up 10 or more kilograms of cocaine and deliver it to Neal Chesterfield. Chesterfield, a law enforcement officer, would then smuggle the cocaine through the King Airport using his law enforcement credentials to bypass Customs and TSA inspection. Chesterfield would then travel to Ft. Lauderdale onboard Spirit Airlines. Once the cocaine arrived on the mainland, Haynes and his co-conspirators were responsible for distributing the cocaine in locations throughout Florida, Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi at a cost of approximately \$33,000 per kilogram.

Haynes also pleaded guilty Monday to a second conspiracy involving a different drug trafficking organization led by Nilda Morton. During the course of that conspiracy, Morton used commercial airline employees to smuggle cocaine through the King Airport. The airline employees used their security clearances to bypass security and get the cocaine into the airport lounge. On June 22, 2016, Morton directed a female courier to meet a Delta Airlines employee in the public restroom located in the Spirit Airlines lounge. The female courier took possession of vacuum-sealed packages containing between 3.5 and 5 kilograms of cocaine and placed February them in her carry-on bag before boarding a commercial flight to Orlando, Florida. Upon arrival in Orlando, Haynes met the courier and took possession of the packages of cocaine.

For the first conspiracy, which involved between 50 and 150 kilograms of cocaine, Haynes faces a term of imprisonment of not less than 10 years and not more than life, and a fine of up to \$10 million. For the second conspiracy, which involved between 3.5 and 5 kilograms of cocaine, Haynes faces a term of imprisonment of not less than 5 years and not more than 40 years, and a fine of up to \$5 million.

This case was investigated by Homeland Security Investigations, the Federal Bureau of Investigations and the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration. It was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Delia Smith.