

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Former St. John Queen, Sentenced To More Than 2 Yrs In Prison, Promises To Steer Clear Of Criminal Activity

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"From the bottom of my heart, I am sorry. I promise that after this rough journey in prison has concluded, I will not be involved in any illegal acts ever again."

Those were the words of former St. John Festival Queen Kinia Blyden, which she wrote in court, according to court documents. The former queen, who nabbed the title in 2011, was sentenced on May 10 to 26 months in prison and five years of supervision after her release.

Ms. Blyden was among 11 individuals who had [pleaded guilty on January 26, 2017](#), to a drug trafficking and money laundering conspiracy.

According to the plea agreements filed with the court, from October 2015 through July 2016, Nilda Morton, the leader of the drug trafficking organization, supplied cocaine to Vanier Murraine utilizing Delta Airlines employees Taheeda George and Roniqua Hart. The Delta employees then used their security clearances at the Cyril E. King Airport to smuggle cocaine to Dellana Magner, Kanya Tirado, Ms. Blyden, and Jerrisha Rawlins after they had completed their pre-boarding security clearances, but before they boarded their commercial flights to the U.S. mainland.

On three occasions between June and July 2016, airport security surveillance footage captured the defendants in the public restroom removing vacuum-sealed packages of cocaine from their bodies and placing them in the couriers' carry-on bags before they boarded their flights. After the cocaine was sold stateside, Nilda Morton arranged for her brother, Rasheem Morton, Dellana Magner, Te'Nae George, Ms. Blyden, Jerrisha Rawlins, Roniqua Hart and Monique David to transport the cash proceeds back to St. Thomas, where she took possession of the money. The investigation culminated on July 1, 2016, with the arrest of Dellana Magner after she smuggled three kilograms of cocaine onboard an American Airlines flight destined for Miami.

Ms. Blyden had requested leniency in the sentencing. The sentencing memorandum spoke of her otherwise exemplary life before getting involved in drug trafficking. Her defense attorney, Carl Williams, said Ms. Blyden surrendered to the federal authorities and started serving time before her trial. He said she learned Spanish while enrolled in a business class during her time in the Metropolitan Detention Center in Guaynabo, Puerto Rico, which was only offered in Spanish in the federal prison.

Ms. Morton, the leader of the ring, [was sentenced to 7.5 years in federal prison](#).

"Ms. Blyden's deepest regrets are for the hurt and disappointment she has caused her family," Mr. Williams wrote as part of the sentencing memorandum. "At the time of her incarceration, Ms. Blyden was the mother of a nine-month old boy, her first child. Her detention has resulted in her son turning 2 years old without knowing the comfort only a mother's touch, voice, and soothing can bring. this one fact, above all the rest, drives Ms. Blyden back towards the honest path down which she had initially started."

Feature Image: Kinia Blyden (Credit: Unknown)