

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Man Said To Be Part Of Large Cocaine Smuggling Ring Between 2012 To 2016 Sentenced To 191 Months Imprisonment

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ST. THOMAS -- Gerald W. Mercer, 42, was sentenced on Tuesday to 191 months in prison for his role in a conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute cocaine, United States Attorney Gretchen C.F. Shappert announced.

District Judge Curtis V. Gomez also sentenced Mercer to five years of supervised release, 400 hours of community service, and a \$100 special assessment. On June 1, 2018, Mercer was found guilty by a federal jury sitting in St. Thomas.

According to trial testimony, Mercer was a member of a large-scale cocaine smuggling organization that operated out of the Cyril E. King Airport between January of 2012 and November of 2016. The drug organization recruited a member of the Virgin Islands Police Department's Executive Security Unit (ESU), who used his law enforcement credentials to bypass security screening at Cyril E. King Airport, according to the release.

The organization smuggled at least 75 kilograms of cocaine from St. Thomas to Miami and Fort Lauderdale., according to the U.S. Attorney's Office release. The officer who transported the drugs was to be paid \$2,500 per kilogram.

According to trial testimony, Mercer would travel to the officer's residence and provide him with a cellular phone, the first half of the payment, and a duffle bag containing the cocaine. Mercer would instruct the officer to purchase airline tickets and hotel reservations. While at the residence, Mercer would prepare and pack the cocaine (an average of 5 kilograms per trip) in the officer's carry-on bag. Upon arrival in Florida, the officer would receive the second half of his payment.

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.