

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Two USVI Assistant Attorneys To Receive Awards For Outstanding Work In Prosecution Of Transnational Drug Organizations

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United States Attorney Gretchen C.F. Shappert announced today that two federal prosecutors in the Virgin Islands U.S. Attorney's Office (VI-USAO), will be honored on October 26 at a national awards ceremony in Miami, sponsored by the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) program of the Department of Justice.

According to the release, the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) Program was established in 1982 to coordinate a comprehensive attack against organized drug traffickers. Today, the OCDETF Program is the centerpiece of the

United States Attorney General's drug strategy to reduce the availability of drugs by disrupting and dismantling major drug trafficking organizations, money-laundering networks, and related criminal enterprises.

OCDETF combines the resources and expertise of federal law enforcement agencies in a coordinated attack against major drug trafficking and transnational criminal organizations. The OCDETF program includes the 94 U.S. Attorneys' Offices (USAOs), the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (USCIS), the U.S. Marshals Service (USMS), the Criminal and Tax Divisions of the U.S. Department of Justice, and numerous State and local agencies.

Assistant United States Attorney Delia Smith, the VI-USAO Lead OCDETF Attorney, will receive a national award for her leadership and prosecution of a large cocaine conspiracy known as Smuggler Smash. This investigation led to 22 convictions, including four airline employees and the forfeiture of over \$ 2 million dollars. Among the defendants convicted in this operation were former Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR) Officer Gerald Mercer and former government security officer Neal Chesterfield. Federal prison sentences imposed by the court ranged from 16 years to 30 months.

Also receiving an OCDETF National Award for Individual Achievement is First Assistant United States Attorney Carlos R. Cardona, the former Lead OCDETF Attorney in the Puerto Rico USAO. FAUSA Cardona's award recognizes his exceptional contributions to the OCDETF program during his service in Puerto Rico. He is credited with successfully managing the OCDETF program, while maintaining a significant caseload, mentoring new OCDETF prosecutors and simultaneously serving as the Puerto Rico Lead Strike Force Attorney.

"The U.S. Attorney's Office is fortunate to have two, nationally-recognized narcotics prosecutors, who are committed to dismantling transnational criminal networks and drug cartels," said U.S. Attorney Shappert. "We are deeply grateful for their enormous contributions to our efforts to interdict drug-dealing criminals and to provide for enhanced public safety in the Territory."