

The Virgin Islands Consortium

St. Croix Man Sentenced To 20 Years For Conspiracy And Possession Of Cocaine

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ST. CROIX -- District Court Judge Wilma A. Lewis on November 8 sentenced Jose R. Hodge, age 38, of St. Croix, to 20 years in prison for conspiracy to possess cocaine with intent to distribute, attempted possession of cocaine with intent to distribute and possession of cocaine with intent to distribute, United States Attorney Gretchen C.F. Shappert announced.

Judge Lewis also sentenced Hodge to five years of supervised release, and ordered him to pay a fine of \$10,000.000 and a special assessment of \$200.00

On June 26, 2018, a federal jury convicted Hodge along with five co-defendants on cocaine related charges. Evidence at trial revealed that a transnational drug trafficking organization planned the retrieval from the high seas of over 300 kilograms of cocaine during the period of the conspiracy which existed from January 2014 to March 2016, according to the release.

Hodge functioned as a manager in the organization. He managed the mid-sea retrieval of 35 kilograms of cocaine in August 2014, 71 kilograms of cocaine in October 2014, 80 kilograms of cocaine in November 2014, 30 kilograms of cocaine in December 2014 and 87 kilograms of cocaine in November 2015, the District Court said. Except for the November 2014 shipment, all other shipments were successfully retrieved and transported, via boat, to St. Croix. On November 14, 2015, law enforcement agents seized the 87 kilogram shipment which was packaged in four suitcases on a beach at Knight's Bay on St. Croix. They apprehended four members of the organization including Hodge, according to the release.

The District Court said fourteen individuals were originally charged as part of the drug trafficking organization. Prior to trial six defendants entered guilty pleas and were sentenced. Of the six defendants that went to trial one other besides Hodge, that is, Jesus Burgos-Montanez, was sentenced to 68 months of incarceration for his role in the offense.

The case was investigated by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration and was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Alphonso G. Andrews, Jr. and Everard E. Potter.