

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Man Sentenced To 10 Years For Conspiracy And Attempted Possession Of Cocaine

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ST. CROIX -- Jean Carlos Vega-Arizmendi, age 27, of Puerto Rico, was sentenced on Friday to 120 months in prison for conspiracy to possess cocaine with intent to distribute and attempted possession of cocaine with intent to distribute, by District Court Judge Wilma A. Lewis, announced United States Attorney Gretchen C.F. Shappert.

Judge Lewis also sentenced Vega-Arizmendi to five years of supervised release, and ordered him to pay a fine of \$2,000.00 and a special assessment of \$300.00.

On June 26, 2018, a federal jury convicted Vega-Arizmendi along with five co-defendants on cocaine-related charges. Evidence at trial revealed that the organization planned for

the retrieval of over 300 kilograms of cocaine during the period of the conspiracy. Approximately 223 kilograms of cocaine were actually distributed by the drug organization. Law enforcement efforts to interdict the drug shipments were successful, beginning in 2015. Between December 13 and 15, 2014, Vega-Arizmendi assisted others in attempts to retrieve 30 kilograms of cocaine mid-sea. Vega-Arizmendi functioned as a boat operator.

In May 2015, he bought a gas tank for a boat in St. Croix that was to be used to retrieve a load of cocaine. The boat flipped and was never taken out to sea. During the summer of 2015, Vega-Arizmendi and others also attempted to retrieve a 70 kilogram load of cocaine and transport it into Culebra. Vega-Arizmendi functioned as the look-out person during that episode.

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 that were convicted on June 26, 2018, four have been sentenced and two are awaiting sentence.

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.