

The Virgin Islands Consortium

St. Croix Man Who Hid Gun And Ammunition In Tropical Shipping Container Traveling To USVI Pleads Guilty To Possession Of Firearm By A Convicted Felon

Crime / **Published On July 24, 2019 11:59 PM /**

Staff **July 24, 2019**



ST. CROIX -- William Payne, 39, of St. Croix, pleaded guilty on Wednesday in District Court to one federal count of possession of a firearm by a convicted felon, United States Attorney Gretchen C.F. Shappert announced.

According to court documents, on April 28, 2017, Payne and another individual traveled to Southern Oaks Gun & Pawn, a federally licensed firearms dealer, located in Orlando, Florida. Payne was present when the other individual purchased a KEL TEC PLR-16 semi-automatic pistol.

On May 2, 2017, Payne caused the same firearm, two high-capacity magazines, and ammunition to be shipped by Tropical Shipping via seaborne container freight shipment from Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, to St. Croix. The firearm, high capacity magazines, and ammunition thus traveled in or affected interstate commerce.

On May 16, 2017, Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers conducted an inspection of an inbound Tropical Shipping freight container. Upon inspection of a pallet of commercial goods destined for a local St. Croix business, CBP officers located the KEL TEC PLR-16 semi- automatic pistol, the two high-capacity magazines for the firearm, and 206 rounds of 5.56x45mm ammunition hidden amongst a larger shipment of items for commercial use. The box containing the firearm, high-capacity magazines, and ammunition bore a prior shipping label addressed to Payne at a Florida address.

On May 17, 2017, Homeland Security Investigations special agents and other federal special agents conducted a controlled delivery of the firearm, high-capacity magazines, and ammunition. Payne and the owner of the small business arrived at Tropical Shipping to receive the shipment. Payne was arrested after the pallet containing the KEL TEC PLR-16 semi- automatic pistol, high capacity magazines, and ammunition were loaded onto the pickup that was being used to transport the pallet from Tropical Shipping.

Payne was previously convicted of three felony offenses: in 2000, for grand theft of a motor vehicle; in 2001, for resisting officer with violence, and in 2007, for delivery of cocaine, all in the Circuit Court for the Ninth Judicial Circuit, In and For Orange County, Florida.

The offense carries a possible sentence of incarceration of up to 10 years, a maximum fine of up to \$250,000 dollars, and a term of supervised release of up to 3 years. Sentencing is scheduled for November 22, 2019.

The case was investigated by Customs and Border Protection (CBP), Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), and Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). Assistant U.S. Attorney Daniel H. Huston prosecuted the case.