

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Fifth Defendant Convicted By St. Croix Federal Jury Sentenced To 135 Months For Conspiracy And Attempted Possession Of Cocaine

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ST. CROIX -- Anibal Vega-Arizmendi, age 29, of Puerto Rico, was sentenced today to 135 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, and a special assessment of \$300.

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 the mid-sea retrieval of over 300 kilograms of cocaine during the period of the conspiracy, January 2014 through March 2016.

Approximately 223 kilograms of cocaine were actually distributed by the drug organization. Law enforcement efforts to interdict some of the the drug shipments were successful, beginning in 2015. In October 2014, Vega-Arizmendi and others effected the mid-sea retrieval of 71 kilograms of cocaine. Between December 13 and 15, 2014, he assisted others in attempts to retrieve 30 kilograms of cocaine mid-sea. Witnessed testified that Vega-Arizmendi functioned as a boat operator. Between November 7, 2015 and November 12, 2015, he and others made several unsuccessful attempts to retrieve 87 kilograms of cocaine from mid-sea.

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, five have been sentenced and one is 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.