

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Former TSA Officer Caught With Kilogram Of Cocaine Attempting To Pass Through Pre-Departure Checkpoint At Cyril E. King Airport

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ST. THOMAS -- Former TSA Officer Miguel Batista, Jr., 26, appeared yesterday before District Judge Curtis V. Gomez for an advice of rights hearing after being taken into custody by the Homeland Security Investigations at the Cyril E. King Airport. Batista was charged with possession with intent to distribute cocaine, United States Attorney Gretchen C.F. Shappert announced. At the conclusion of the hearing, Judge Gomez remanded Batista to federal custody pending his detention hearing on Wednesday.

According to court records, on Saturday, Batista presented himself to the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) pre-departure checkpoint in an attempt to board Jet Blue flight #1035 to San Juan, PR. Batista was referred to secondary inspection where CBP officers noticed that he was wearing a suspicious under garment. When questioned about the under garment, Batista told CBP officers that he was in a car accident and had to wear the garment for support. Further inspection revealed a hard, brick-shaped object concealed under Batista's under garment and duct taped to his left torso. After removing the brick-shaped object, CBP officers discovered a vacuum-sealed package covered in blue and white wrapping paper which contained a white powdery substance. The white powdered substance tested positive for the presence of cocaine, and weighed approximately 1.03 kilos.

This case is being investigated by the Homeland Security Investigations, and is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Delia L. Smith.

United States Attorney Shappert reminds the public that an information is merely a formal charging document and is not evidence of guilt. Every defendant is presumed innocent until and unless found guilty.