

The Virgin Islands Consortium

St. Croix Man Who Schemed Murder-For-Hire Plot to Kill Mother and Daughter Sentenced to 15 Years in Federal Prison

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ST. CROIX — United States Attorney for the District of the USVI, Gretchen C.F. Shappert announced Thursday that Chief Judge Wilma Lewis on Wednesday sentenced Delroy Thomas, 30, of St. Croix, to 120 months in prison, a \$3,000 fine, three years of supervised release and a \$100 special assessment for the federal charge of murder for hire. Judge Lewis also sentenced Thomas to five years on the Virgin Islands local charge of attempted retaliation against a witness, to run consecutive to the federal sentence.

According to the evidence presented at a July 2019 trial, between March 9, 2015 to March 11, 2015, Thomas made a series of telephone calls, while in Golden Grove Correctional Facility, to another inmate. He solicited the inmate's assistance to eliminate two witnesses in his pending Superior Court case.

Thomas described the location of the witnesses' residence to the inmate and texted their photographs to the other inmate. He told the inmate that he wanted them "off"; that he was dead serious; that he would get the gun (to commit the murders of the witnesses); that this was the result of Thomas's eight months of thinking; and that there were no ifs, ands, buts or changing of his mind. Thomas discussed the price for the planned "hit" and directed a female to place \$500 into a particular vehicle, intending that the money would serve as a down payment for the planned murders. He also admitted that if the inmate did not carry out the hit, he (Thomas) would find someone else to commit the crimes. Unbeknownst to Thomas, the inmate with whom Thomas was communicating was a confidential informant for the Drug Enforcement Administration, which recorded the phone calls. One of the witnesses at trial identified Thomas's voice on the calls.

Post-arrest, Thomas told agents that he may have discussed eliminating witnesses in his case with other inmates when he was angry, but he denied that there was any murder for hire plot. Thomas testified at his trial that he did make the recorded statements in the jail calls, but that was merely "going along" with a scheme by the inmate, who had threatened him into participating in the calls. Thomas claimed that the calls were rehearsed, and that he simply followed the plan.

The government, however, presented evidence of text messages Thomas sent to other individuals, before the phone calls, stating in substance that Thomas was planning a massacre and that if officials did not let him out of prison, he would put a hit on the witness and her mother.

On March 12, 2015, Bureau of Corrections officers searched Thomas's prison cell and seized three cellular telephones and a knife from a chase accessible from his cell.

This case was investigated by the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Virgin Islands Police Department and the Gang Intelligence Search Team of the V.I. Bureau of Corrections. It was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Rhonda Williams-Henry.