

The Virgin Islands Consortium

St. Croix Woman Sentenced for Attempting to Smuggle Marijuana Through Cyril E. King Airport

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U.S. Attorney Gretchen C.F. Shappert announced Friday that Raquel Rivera, from St. Croix, was sentenced for the federal crime of possession with intent to distribute 6 kilograms of marijuana. Rivera was convicted at trial in May of 2021.

On Wednesday, November 3, Chief Judge Robert A. Molloy sentenced Rivera to 5 years probation.

According to court documents, evidence presented at trial established that Rivera was stopped on April 22, 2020 at the Cyril E. King airport after arriving on St. Thomas from Miami, FL. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers searched her luggage,

including one suitcase checked in using Rivera's name and one checked in using the name of someone else.

Inside her luggage, officers found 12 identical, vacuum-sealed bags of marijuana concealed in various items of clothing, including jeans, towels, and a Hello Kitty blanket. In total, Rivera possessed nearly six kilograms of marijuana in both suitcases. When interviewed by officers that day, she gave conflicting accounts of what was in the suitcases and who packed them prior to her travel. A unanimous jury found Rivera guilty of possession of marijuana with intent to distribute.

Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) investigated the case. Assistant U.S. Attorney Natasha Baker and Nathan Brooks prosecuted the case.

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