

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Woman Traveling to St. Croix Arrested After 12.5 Kilograms of Marijuana is Found in Her Luggage; Separately, Georgia Man Pleads Guilty to Marijuana Charge

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Henry E. Rohlsen Airport

ST. CROIX — A woman traveling to St. Croix from North Carolina was arrested over the weekend after federal law enforcement allegedly found 12.5 kilograms of marijuana in her luggage.

According to U.S. Attorney Gretchen C.F. Shappert, Cynthia Ines Fernandes, age 33 of St. Augustine, Florida, was arrested on November 6 on St. Croix on criminal charges relating to her travel to the island from Charlotte, North Carolina via airline.

According to court documents, she possessed two checked bags that contained 13 individually vacuum-wrapped bags with approximately 12.5 kilograms of a green leafy substance which tested positive for marijuana.

Court documents allege that Fernandes possessed with the intent to distribute the 13 individually wrapped vacuum sealed packages of marijuana, found wrapped in between clothing. An initial appearance was conducted on November 8 before U.S. District Court Magistrate Judge George W. Cannon, Jr., who set a preliminary hearing date of November 18 at 9:00 a.m.

If convicted, she faces a maximum of 5 years in prison. A federal district court judge will determine any sentence after considering the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

U.S. Customs Border Protection and Homeland Security Investigations are investigating the case.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Melissa P. Ortiz is prosecuting the case.

Man Pleads Guilty to Marijuana Possession With Intent to Distribute

In a separate but similar matter, a man traveling to St. Croix whose luggage allegedly contained four pounds of marijuana, pleaded guilty Tuesday in federal court to possession of a controlled substance with the intent to distribute, according to U.S. Attorney Shappert.

According to court documents, Ra’Kheel Velasquez, age 24, of Georgia traveled to St. Croix on a Delta flight originating from Atlanta, Georgia with checked luggage containing approximately 1.76 kilograms (approximately 4 pounds) of marijuana in four individually wrapped packages intended for distribution.

He is scheduled to be sentenced on March 10, 2022 and faces a maximum penalty of 5 years in prison. A federal district court judge will determine any sentence after considering the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

Customs Border Protection and Homeland Securities Investigation are investigating the case.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Melissa Ortiz is prosecuting the case.

This prosecution is part of an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) investigation. OCDETF identifies, disrupts, and dismantles the highest-level drug traffickers, money launderers, gangs, and transnational criminal organizations that threaten the United States by using a prosecutor-led, intelligence-driven, multi-agency approach that leverages the strengths of federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies against criminal networks.

