

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Feds Seize Massive Load of Cocaine in Frenchtown; One Suspect Caught in Closet, Another in Silver Tacoma

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ST. THOMAS — United States Attorney Gretchen C.F. Shappert announced today that charges have been filed against two men for conspiracy to distribute more than five kilograms of cocaine, following the seizure of 86 kilograms of cocaine and a firearm at a Frenchtown residence on St. Thomas.

Yefri Martinez Herrera and Kelly Bruney were arrested Thursday and made their initial appearances in federal court today.

According to court documents, Kelly Bruney is the alleged leader of a drug trafficking organization which distributes kilogram quantities of cocaine to drug organizations in the Caribbean and owns kilogram quantities of drugs in St. Thomas. Yefri Martinez Herrera is described in court documents as a “broker”, who connects individuals looking to purchase kilogram quantities of cocaine with individuals looking to sell kilogram quantities of cocaine.

On January 18, Martinez Herrera and Bruney were involved in planning a drug transaction involving 200 kilograms of cocaine, and on February 3, Martinez Herrera and Bruney prepared to sell 86 kilograms of cocaine. However, the men could not agree on a public meeting location for the drug deal, because Martinez Herrera was fearful of law enforcement due to the fact that he had a pending arrest warrant for conspiracy to transport aliens and bringing in and harboring aliens issued by the District Court of Puerto Rico.

Federal agents were able to identify the location and home where Martinez Herrera was staying with the drugs. When agents entered the home, they observed eighty-seven brick-like objects, later identified as cocaine, on the floor of a bedroom on the second floor and a Glock 23 pistol located in the same room.

While conducting a safety sweep of the home, agents located Martinez Herrera hiding inside one of the closets of a bedroom on the first level and arrested him. Moments later agents spotted Bruney in the vicinity driving a silver Tacoma. Bruney was also arrested.

This case is being investigated jointly by the Drug Enforcement Administration, Homeland Security Investigation, Air Marine Operations, Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, United States Postal Inspection Service, Puerto Rico Police Department and Virgin Islands Police Department. It is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Juan Albino.

United States Attorney Shappert reminded the public that a complaint is merely a formal charging document, and it is not evidence of guilt. Every defendant is presumed innocent until and unless found guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.