

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Man Who Says He Was Given \$15,000 by Random Person to Carry Marijuana to St. Thomas Pleads Guilty

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ST. THOMAS — United States Attorney Gretchen C.F. Shappert has announced that Christopher Turnbull of New York pleaded guilty on Tuesday to possession with intent to distribute marijuana.

According to court documents, U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers were conducting screenings of arriving passengers at the Cyril E. King Airport on November 11, 2020, when Turnbull disembarked an American Airlines flight from Charlotte, NC. He was selected for inspection.

Upon searching a black carry-on suitcase in Turnbull's possession, officers discovered approximately eight different sealed packages containing a green leafy substance that tested positive for the presence of marijuana. The packages weighed approximately 5 kilograms. A laboratory exam confirmed the presence of approximately 3.8 kilograms of marijuana.

Turnbull, who originally departed from the Ronald Reagan National Airport in Washington, D.C., claimed that while he was waiting at the gate for his connecting flight in Charlotte, N.C, an unknown man approached him and offered him \$15,000 to transport the black carry-on suitcase to St. Thomas.

Turnbull is scheduled to be sentenced by a federal district court judge on June 23, 2022.

The Department of Homeland Security-Homeland Security Investigations and CBP investigated the case. It is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Kyle Payne and 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, multiagency approach that leverages the strengths of federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies against criminal networks.