

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Man Who Sent Extremely Deadly Drug to St. Thomas is Convicted by Jury in USVI's First Fentanyl Conspiracy Case

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ST. THOMAS — United States Attorney Delia L. Smith announced today that a federal jury convicted Elijah Hakim, of St. Thomas, in the District's first prosecution of conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute fentanyl and possession with intent to distribute fentanyl prosecution.

Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that is 50 times more potent than heroin. Just two milligrams of fentanyl, or the amount that could fit on the tip of a pencil, is considered a potentially lethal dose, the U.S. Attorney's Office said.

Chief District Judge Robert A. Molloy schedule Hakim's sentencing for February 24, 2023.

According to court documents and evidence presented at trial, from April 20, 2021, to May 20, 2021, Hakim conspired to mail two packages containing fentanyl from Georgia to St. Thomas. The first package was mailed on April 22, 2021, and contained 150 fentanyl pills weighing approximately 17.5 grams which were concealed in a vitamin bottle. The package was filled with spray foam and mailed from an Atlanta, GA, area post office to St. Thomas. The second package was mailed on May 18, 2021, and contained 200 fentanyl pills weighing approximately 25 grams which were concealed inside a Gucci gift box.

Like the first package, the second package was filled with spray foam to further conceal the pills and mailed from an Atlanta, GA post office. Both packages were seized by U.S. Customs and Border Protections officers in San Juan, PR and St. Thomas, VI. Court documents also revealed that during this period, a victim on St. Thomas overdosed from consuming pills suspected to contain fentanyl.

At trial, the United States introduced fingerprints found on the May package which matched Hakim's fingerprints. Also admitted at trial was packaging material found in Hakim's Atlanta apartment which consisted of a spray foam cannister, bubble wrap, vacuum sealed bags and fiber tape consistent with the packaging used to conceal the fentanyl in the April and May packages.

"Across the United States, opioids, primarily fentanyl, killed over 80,000 people in 2021 alone," stated United States Attorney Delia Smith. "Here in the Virgin Islands, we have thus far been spared the worst of the opioid epidemic, but these two shipments of fentanyl show that we are not immune. Fortunately, the vigilance and dedication of our law enforcement partners led to the interception of these deadly drugs and we were able to convict those responsible. We will continue to do everything in our power to keep the Virgin Islands safe from this lethal scourge."

"The defendant's lawless misuse of the U.S. Mail has finally come to a halt," said Juan A. Vargas, Acting Inspector in Charge of the Miami Division. "Postal Inspectors will continue to work collaboratively with our law enforcement partners to combine our resources and expertise to combat the perils of illegal and dangerous drug distribution."

"Our extraordinary enforcement partnerships allow us to work in unison and combat drug trafficking and the violence this brings," said SAC Denise Foster from the DEA Caribbean Division. "It's the DEA's mission to dismantle and destroy drug trafficking organizations no matter where they originate. We will continue to work diligently with our Federal, state, and local counterparts and to bring to justice those who seek to poison our communities."

The investigation was conducted by the United States Postal Inspection Service, the Drug Enforcement Administration, U.S. Customs and Border Protection and Homeland Security Investigations. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Meredith Edwards and Kyle Payne prosecuted the case.