

Cocaine Smuggling Attempt Gone Bad Leads to Arrest of Two Men at Cyril E. King Airport. They Face 20 Years Imprisonment.

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The Cyril E. King Airport in St. Thomas, USVI. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

ST. THOMAS — United States Attorney Delia L. Smith announced this week that Shakari Francis, 26, of St. Thomas, and Ahkoy Smith, 24, of Daytona Beach, FL, appeared before U.S. Magistrate Ruth Miller for an initial appearance hearing after being charged with possession with intent to distribute cocaine.

According to court documents, on January 11, 2023, Customs and Border Protection Officers at Cyril E. King Airport were screening passengers on Spirit Airlines flight NK283 from St. Thomas to Orlando. During the screening, Smith, a ticketed passenger on flight NK283, attempted to flee

but was apprehended by CBP officers. A CBP canine later alerted to Smith's "Jordan" backpack which was on his back when he was apprehended. Smith admitted that he packed his backpack and that it belonged to him. CBP officers inspected Smith's backpack and discovered two brick-shaped objects wrapped in black tape which later tested positive for the presence of cocaine and weighed approximately 2.25 kilograms.

Also on January 11, 2023, CBP officers observed Francis, a Cape Air ramp agent, entering the men's restroom located in the departure terminal shortly after Smith entered the same restroom. Francis admitted that he entered the restroom with two bricks of cocaine which he later delivered to Smith.

Francis and Smith both face a maximum penalty of 20 years imprisonment if convicted. A federal district court judge will determine any sentence after considering the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

Homeland Security Investigations and Customs and Border Patrol are investigating, and Assistant United States Attorney Adam Sleeper is prosecuting this case. This effort is part of an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) operation. OCDETF identifies, disrupts, and dismantles the highest-level criminal organizations that threaten the United States using a prosecutor-led, intelligence-driven, multi-agency approach. Additional information about the OCDETF Program can be found at <https://www.justice.gov/OCDETF>.

United States Attorney Delia L. Smith reminds the public that a criminal complaint is merely an allegation that a crime was committed, and all defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.