

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Man Sentenced to Ten Years for Conspiracy to Possess With Intent to Distribute Cocaine

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ST. THOMAS — United States Attorney Delia L. Smith announced today that Matthew Hazel, 31, was sentenced on January 27, 2023 to 120 months' imprisonment followed by five years of supervised release for conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute cocaine.

District Court Chief Judge Robert Molloy also sentenced Hazel to 60 months' imprisonment followed by three years of supervised release for possession of a firearm by a prohibited person, with both sentences to run concurrently. Hazel must also pay a \$200 special assessment.

On August 18, 2022, Hazel pleaded guilty to conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute cocaine and possession of a firearm by a prohibited person in connection with a drug deal that occurred at the Havensight Mall on St. Thomas.

According to court documents, on October 13, 2021, a Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Confidential Source (CS) arranged to purchase 25 kilograms of cocaine for \$312,000. On October 14, 2021, at approximately, 4:01 PM, agents and the CS arrived at the Havensight Mall, which was the agreed-upon location, for the CS to purchase the cocaine. Hazel was one of several individuals who arrived at the scene. Hazel arrived driving a black G35 Infiniti sedan, which bore no license plate. Upon arrival on the scene, Hazel spoke with a couple of men before he exited the G35 Infiniti as the trunk of the vehicle sprung open. Agents then observed Hazel and the CS at the rear of the G35 looking into the trunk. Moments later, agents observed Hazel close the trunk as the CS gave a signal to the agents, confirming the presence of the suspected cocaine in the G35 Infiniti.

Agents arrested Hazel and the other men. After the arrest, agents recovered approximately 25 brick-like packages of suspected cocaine from the trunk of the G35 Infiniti and one loaded semi-automatic Walther Arms handgun, which was on the driver's seat.

This case is being investigated jointly by the DEA, Homeland Security Investigations, Air Marine Operations, Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and the Virgin Islands Police Department. It is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Melissa Ortiz and Meredith Edwards.

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.