

The Virgin Islands Consortium

\$11k in Cash and No Luggage - Puerto Rico Man Sentenced to Almost 3 Years for Cocaine Trafficking

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The Cyril E. King Airport in St. Thomas, USVI on Jan. 17, 2023. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

ST. THOMAS — A man who traveled from Puerto Rico to the USVI with thousands in cash and no luggage has been sentenced for cocaine trafficking.

A press release from U.S. Attorney Delia Smith indicates that 34-year-old Julio Soto Robles landed at the Cyril E King Airport in St. Thomas on August 18th, 2020. He was traveling with another man — Gregory Vega — and neither of them were carrying any luggage. According to Attorney Smith, the men was searched by Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agents and Soto Robles was found to be carrying about \$11,000.

He told the CBP officers that the money was for his relative, to whom he referred as "Tia Abuela" and "Rafaela" and who he says he never met.

Two days later, Soto Robles and Vega were back at the airport for the return journey to Puerto Rico. This time, they were carrying a suitcase. Inside, CBP officers during a secondary inspection found three parcels of what turned out to be cocaine, totaling just under three quarters of a kilogram.

Soto Robles pleaded guilty on August 24th, 2022 to possession with intent to distribute cocaine, and was sentenced on January 27th, 2023 to 32 months in prison and four years of supervised release following his period of incarceration.

The case was investigated by Customs and Border Protection and Homeland Security Investigations, with Assistant U.S. Attorney Kyle Payne prosecuting the matter.