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## Man, Woman Arrested in Separate Incidents at Cyril E. King Airport For Drugs in Luggage

Crime / **Published On March 18, 2023 06:27 AM /**

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From left to right, mugshots of Daysha Thompson and Jordan Stephen Rodriquez. By. THE VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT

ST. THOMAS — In separate incidents, two individuals are facing drug charges after police intercepted what appeared to be controlled substances in their luggage at the Cyril E. King Airport.

On Wednesday March 15, VIPD officers were dispatched to the baggage claim carousel to meet with Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers regarding luggage which possibly contained a controlled substance. When the officers arrived, the supervisory CBP officer identified the item that he believed contained the substance. Authorities opened the suitcase and saw that there was a

large vacuum sealed bag inside. The suitcase was closed back up and placed on the carousel to be picked up by its owner, while law enforcement agents monitored the area to see who would claim the luggage in question.

A red cap porter — a person employed to carry luggage and other loads — was spotted carrying the suitcase away on a cart, and later a woman identified as Daysha Thompson was seen standing next to the cart, speaking to the porter. Police approached her and asked if the luggage belonged to her. “Yes,” Ms. Thompson told them, before she and the suitcase were escorted away for further inspection. Police again asked her who the luggage belonged to. This time, she told them that the small bag was hers while the other bags belonged to her sister and her sister’s boyfriend.

However, officers told her that she was responsible for the contents of all of the luggage, since she had previously claimed ownership and they were all in her possession. A search of the three pieces of luggage in Ms. Thompson’s possession turned up clothing in the small bag and two vacuum sealed bags in each of the two large suitcases. The four vacuum sealed bags, when they were opened, were found to contain a total of over 58 pounds (26.62 kilograms) of marijuana, packaged in smaller portions. Thompson was placed under arrest and charged with possession of a controlled substance with intent to distribute, and illegal trafficking.

The following day, March 16, police were summoned to the luggage ramp area on the air side of the terminal, where they met with CBP officers. The VIPD was informed that incoming flights contained luggage with suspected narcotics on board, and were instructed to assist in monitoring the baggage claim area to see who would remove the luggage that was of interest.

A man identified as Jordan Stephen Rodriguez took the suitcase in question off the carousel and left the baggage claim area, stopping at the exit to make a phone call before heading east towards the parking lot ticket booth. That’s when the undercover CBP officer made contact with Rodriguez and took him into custody.

Rodriguez was transported to the CBP office where he was questioned about his inbound flight and the purpose of his travel to the USVI. He told them that he had packed his own suitcase but was unable to open it when asked to do so. Officers used a TSA tool to get the bag open, and inside they found neatly folded clothes on top of sealed bags which contained white t-shirts inside. Those t-shirts were found, when removed, to be wrapped around vacuum sealed bags filled with marijuana - a total of almost 20 pounds (8.8 kg).

Rodriguez was then arrested and charged with possession of a controlled substance and possession with intent to distribute.

Both Thompson and Rodriguez were scheduled to appear in court for their advice of rights hearing on Friday March 17, 2023, however as of press time, no record of proceedings have been uploaded by the court in either matter. The court has decided to stop providing Zoom links to the media, based on a directive from Presiding Judge Debra Watlington, according to Tamara Charles, clerk of the V.I. Superior Court.