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Las Vegas Woman Caught Smuggling 59 Pounds of Marijuana at Dulles Airport

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On 3 August 2025, Aleshia Anne Pinheiro, a 42-year-old Las Vegas resident, was arrested at Washington Dulles International Airport (IAD) after U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers discovered 59 pounds of marijuana in her luggage, destined for Frankfurt, Germany, according to a CBP news release. Charged with felony counts of transporting a controlled substance into Virginia and possession with intent to distribute by the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA) Police, Pinheiro's attempt to board an international flight underscores the persistent challenge of drug trafficking across U.S. borders, with authorities emphasizing the severe consequences of such actions.

During routine baggage inspections for the Germany-bound flight, CBP officers identified two hard-sided suitcases containing 50 vacuum-sealed packages of a green leafy substance, later confirmed as 59 pounds, 4 ounces of marijuana, per the CBP. The drugs, valued at approximately \$240,000 in the U.S., could fetch up to \$720,000 in Europe due to higher demand and prices, officials stated. Pinheiro's name was found on the luggage tags, leading officers to detain her at the departure gate and escort her to a secondary inspection area for further examination, where the marijuana was verified, according to the CBP. The MWAA Police promptly arrested her, and she now faces significant legal repercussions.

CBP officials noted a rising trend of criminal organizations exploiting passenger flights and express air delivery to smuggle marijuana to Europe, where high-potency cannabis yields substantial profits. "Anyone considering making a quick buck by carrying bulk marijuana loads for drug trafficking organizations should realize that the consequences you face can be severe when Customs and Border Protection officers catch you," said Christine Waugh, Area Port Director for CBP's Washington, D.C. office, in a statement to ABC News. Despite legalization in some U.S. states, marijuana remains illegal under federal law, and transporting it across state lines or internationally constitutes a federal offence, as emphasized by CBP.

The seizure aligns with CBP's broader efforts to combat drug smuggling. In 2024, the agency reported seizing an average of 1,571 pounds of illegal drugs daily across U.S. airports, seaports, and border crossings, according to CBP data. Recent cases at Dulles include a Maryland woman arrested with 53 pounds of marijuana in March 2024 and a California woman caught with various drugs in October 2024, per CBP records. These incidents highlight the agency's vigilance in disrupting transnational criminal networks profiting from the illicit drug trade, particularly as Europe's market incentivizes smuggling attempts.

Pinheiro's arrest serves as a stark reminder of the risks associated with drug trafficking, especially under heightened federal scrutiny. The CBP and MWAA Police collaboration reflects a commitment to enforcing federal law and protecting national security, with ongoing investigations to determine any broader connections to criminal organizations. As Pinheiro's case moves through the legal system, it underscores the high stakes of smuggling operations, where financial allure is overshadowed by the threat of felony convictions and substantial penalties. The incident reinforces CBP's resolve to intercept

illegal substances and hold traffickers accountable, safeguarding communities from the impacts of the global drug trade.