

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Driver Tries to Flee After Police Discover Gun on St. Croix, Faces Multiple Charges

Tinted windshield leads to discovery and arrest as police find firearm in vehicle

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Mugshot of Akeebo Francis. By. THE VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT

ST. CROIX — The driver of a car with a fully-tinted windshield was arrested after police reportedly found a firearm inside the vehicle.

According to court documents, police saw the car on Thursday afternoon, traveling west on Queen Mary Highway near Freedom City Service Station in Frederiksted. Noticing the tint and lack of front license plates, officers on mobile patrol traveling in the opposite

direction alerted colleagues via radio and then made a U-turn to follow the red Lexus.

The vehicle turned left onto Morales Drive and pulled over near Eagle's Nest. Police approaching from the passenger side reportedly noticed a transparent plastic bag with suspected marijuana in the center console, and a scale on the passenger seat.

The driver, identified as Akeebo Francis, was asked to step out of the vehicle, patted down, and was informed that the car would be searched to ensure that there was not more than 56 grams of marijuana – the statutory legal limit – present. When one officer pressed the button to slide the driver's seat forward, they reportedly spotted what looked like the handle of a gun on the floorboards underneath the driver's seat.

Upon finding the weapon, police reportedly ordered Francis to put his hands behind his back, and when he did not comply, they grabbed his left hand in order to detain him. Francis reportedly pulled away and began running, with the arresting officer following on foot, reportedly deploying their taser but missing Francis.

A second team of officers arrived on scene and were eventually able to detain Francis, who reportedly admitted under questioning that he did not have a firearm license. The forensics technician that had been summoned identified the weapon as a .40 caliber Springfield handgun, with one round in the chamber and 16 in the attached magazine. The serial number on the weapon had reportedly been obliterated.

Francis was arrested and charged with unauthorized possession of a firearm, possession of ammunition, possession of a firearm with no identifying marks, possession of a controlled substance and possession of drug paraphernalia.

Immediately following his arrest, Francis made a telephone appearance before Magistrate Ernest Morris, who allowed him to be released into the custody of a family member ahead of Friday's advice of rights hearing.

Details of Friday's hearing have not yet been made public, however court records indicate that Francis was granted release ahead of trial, having paid the cash component of his bail requirement - \$1000.

His next court appearance is scheduled for December 6.