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Wife on Receiving End of Brutal Assault From Husband During Vacation on St. Croix

Casual dinner invitation escalates into violent confrontation

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Mugshot of Jovito Stell. By. THE VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT

ST. CROIX — A man was arrested and charged with crimes of domestic violence after being tased by officers who say he refused to cooperate with their commands.

According to court documents, just before 9:00 p.m. on Friday, a concerned citizen called 911, saying that a woman had run into the bathroom of the Oasis Bar and Restaurant on King Street in Frederiksted, saying that her husband was assaulting her and may be outside the restaurant looking for her.

Police dispatched to the location arrived to find the woman inside the establishment and Jovito Stell outside. Stell's wife was placed in a police vehicle to separate her from her husband, who then reportedly refused to comply with several police orders to put his hands behind his back.

Documents submitted to court indicate that officers pointed their tasers at Stell, who reportedly continued to ignore verbal commands until one officer deployed her taser, causing Stell to fall to the ground where he was then handcuffed. After declining medical attention, Stell was taken to the Wilbur H. Francis Command police station.

Stell's wife was also taken to the same police station, where she told officers that she and her husband were vacationing on St. Croix, staying at the Frederiksted Hotel. Earlier that evening, a couple they had met on their travels invited them to dinner at the Fred Hotel. The Stells went back to their hotel room to get ready, and Mrs. Stell said that her husband told her she had five minutes to get ready.

When he asked her how his shirt looked, she reminded him that she only had 5 minutes to get dressed, and said that her retort sparked his anger. Mr. Stell reportedly began calling his wife derogatory names, and threw a bottle of cologne at her. The bottle missed her, but reportedly struck her laptop, damaging it. The woman told police that her husband decided they weren't going anywhere, but later changed his mind, saying that they would go to dinner but only for 20 minutes. She said that he instructed her to tell their new friends that she was unwell, so that they could be excused.

While the Stells walked to the Fred Hotel, Mrs. Stell said her husband kept up the barrage of derogatory name-calling. By the time they arrived, she told him that she was no longer hungry, and she said he responded that he wasn't going to buy her anything anyway, capping off the sentence with another derogatory reference. She recounted how her husband whispered in her ear that it was time for her to feign illness so that they could get back to their hotel, where he would "beat her ass," according to court documents. She did as instructed and said that Mr. Stell began pushing her out the entrance door of the Fred Hotel as they walked out.

As the couple walked, Mrs. Stell said that she tried to get the attention of others, going so far as to walk in the middle of the street and purposefully trip in front of a moving vehicle. Her husband reportedly yanked her upright by the hair, put his arm around her throat, and threatened to choke her as he began applying pressure to her neck. She described how one of her slippers burst, and then both of her shoes came off as she tripped, and her husband continued to assault her. She says she walked barefoot to the Frederiksted Hotel, where Mr. Stell pushed her up against a gate near a building being renovated on King's Cross Street. Mrs. Stell told police that her husband tried to open the gate so that he could continue to assault her in the vacant building, but that he was unsuccessful. A male passer-by eventually heard the husband's aggressions towards his wife, and approached the couple to ask if Mrs. Stell was alright. While her husband argued with the man, Mrs. Stell says she went into their hotel room to get some shoes and a change of clothes before leaving and entering the Oasis Restaurant & Bar, where she hid in the bathroom and asked for help.

Police noted the damage to her laptop, but when asked Mrs. Stell said she herself had not sustained any injuries, although her neck was sore. Forensic technicians located Mrs. Stell's burst slipper on Strand Street.

For his part, Mr. Stell denied assaulting his wife but admitted damaging her laptop, although according to him the damage occurred in Miami, not on St. Croix. He was nevertheless arrested

and charged with second-degree assault as an act of domestic violence.

He appeared in court on Monday, before Magistrate Ernest Morris. There have been no details of any pre-trial release orders or conditions made available to the public as of press time. Similarly, no public records currently exist on whether any bail payments have been received on Mr. Stell's behalf.

The next court appearance for Jovito Stell has also not been scheduled.

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