

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Near-Fatal Shooting in St. Thomas Averted Due to Firearm Malfunction

A tense situation unfolds in St. Thomas as a man narrowly escapes being shot in the head due to a gun malfunction

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Mugshot of Shak-I Ward. By. THE VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT

ST. THOMAS — Christmas Day was marred by violence at the Bovoni Housing Community after one man allegedly nearly missed shooting another resident in the head following a firearm malfunction. Shak-I Ward is now facing multiple felony charges in court.

According to court documents, during the wee hours of December 25, police were dispatched to the Schneider Regional Medical Center in reference to a gunshot victim who had been transported there. Responding officers made contact with the victim, who told them that he had been playing dominoes and joking with friends when a man known as “Fatman”, or “Lilo” approached them aggressively, reportedly assuming that the other men had been speaking about him.

“Fatman”, subsequently identified as Shak-I Ward, reportedly pulled a black firearm from his waistband and pointed it at one man’s head. The man in question said that Ward pulled the trigger, but the gun seemed to have malfunctioned, giving just enough time for another man to hit Ward’s hand away. That’s when the firearm reportedly discharged, wounding Ward’s target on the left side of his face. The friend and Ward then began a physical struggle for control of the weapon, until the other man was able to disarm Ward and toss the gun into the bushes. The aggressor and the victim then left the area, the latter taken to hospital by his wife to seek medical attention.

Later that day, police met with the wife of the gunshot victim, who identified Ward was the one who shot her husband, and told officers that he lived in the housing community with his sister. A [wanted poster](#) was issued for Ward and circulated on the VIPD’s social media pages.

Around 2:00 p.m. on Boxing Day, December 26, police returned to the Bovoni Housing community after someone reported that Ward might be in the area, traveling in a white vehicle. Police tracked down the car in question and found it occupied by two people, one of whom identified herself as Ward’s sister. She told them that she was about to fetch her brother so that he could turn himself in, so the officers escorted the car to Ward’s location and arrested him. He was then transported to the Criminal Investigation Bureau at the Alexander Farrelly Justice Complex.

There, he declined to give a statement and was charged with first-degree assault, third-degree assault, unlawful possession of a firearm, possession of a firearm during a crime of violence (3 counts), unlawful possession of ammunition, illegal discharge of a firearm, reckless endangerment, simple assault, and disturbance of the peace.

Ward was remanded into custody to await his first court appearance, which occurred on December 27 before Magistrate Simone VanHolten-Turnbull. In court on Wednesday, probable cause was found to uphold all charges except that of illegal discharge of a firearm. Bail was maintained at the initial \$100,000 sum, although the Magistrate allowed for the payment of 15 percent of that sum in cash.

If Ward is able to meet the payment terms, he will be required to report to the probation office twice weekly in person, and must surrender his driver’s license to the court. He will be prohibited from obtaining a passport, from leaving the district without court permission, and prohibited from abusing alcohol or controlled substances while the case is ongoing. He will also not be allowed to possess firearms, ammunition, or any dangerous weapon during the course of the matter.

Ward’s next court appearance is scheduled for January 12.