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Woman Who Sought to Extort Victim of \$2,000 in Return For Lost Wallet Arrested During Sting Operation

53-Year-Old Esther Jones detained for demanding cash reward for return of victim's wallet

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Mugshot of Esther Jones. By. THE VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT

ST. CROIX — In a case of alleged extortion that unfolded in the vicinity of Kmart in Sunny Isle, 53-year-old Esther Jones is accused of demanding a cash reward in exchange for a lost wallet.

The incident, which took place on Monday, has led to Jones's arrest and highlighted the swift response of the V.I. Police Department.

The sequence of events began when the victim, having lost his wallet on March 27, was informed on April 6 by a coworker that the wallet had been found. However, the finders' demand for a reward to return the wallet initiated a worrying chain of events. On April 8, the victim received a call from an unknown female, later identified as Jones, who initially demanded \$2,000 for the wallet's return. This amount was subsequently lowered to \$1,000 and then finally agreed upon at \$300.

Acting on the victim's report, detectives from the Criminal Investigation Bureau orchestrated a sting operation at the agreed-upon public meeting location. There, Jones handed over a plastic bag containing the victim's bank cards but withheld the wallet and identification cards, promising their return only after the victim withdrew the agreed sum from the bank. It was at this juncture that law enforcement officials, who had been discreetly monitoring the situation, intervened and arrested Jones.

Jones was charged with attempted extortion, attempted grand larceny, and appropriation of stolen property. Unable to post the \$5,500 bail set, she was transported to the John Bell Correctional Facility. Her Advice of Rights Hearing was scheduled for the following day, April 9, at the Superior Court.