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St. Thomas Couple Arrested After Violent Altercation Leads to Property Damage

Police respond to a 1:00 a.m. incident in Kronprindsens Gade where an argument escalated to physical assault and property damage, resulting in multiple charges for both individuals involved

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The VIPD has not provided the mugshots of suspects Osiris Montero Valdez and Abdul Ghaffar Abiff.

ST. THOMAS — A man and a woman are each facing felony charges after a violent altercation resulted in significant property damage.

According to court documents, police were dispatched to a residence in Kronprindsens Gade around 1:00 a.m. on Thursday to investigate reports of an assault. When they arrived, they spotted

a woman waving and flashing a light through the window, and banging on the glass to get officers' attention.

As they got closer, police noted that the east-facing front door was damaged, as was a plastic chair and an air conditioning unit in the balcony. The woman denied needing medical attention despite the abrasion officers observed below her right eye, and the scratches around her neck. Identified as Osiris Montero Valdez, the woman said that her boyfriend Abdul Ghaffar Abiff had called her earlier that night, and subsequently came to visit.

Their initial conversation escalated into an argument, according to Ms. Valdez, during which Mr. Abiff began to choke her on the couch. She fought back, and in the struggle, Abiff's phone fell to the floor and was damaged. Ultimately, she was able to fend him off and dragged him outside by his shirt so that others could see what was happening. While on the balcony, Abiff began shouting for the return of his wallet, which had been left inside the building. He then reportedly began hitting the front door with a heavy object and subsequently kicked the air conditioning unit out of the wall.

As he walked away, Valdez said she cracked open the door and threw the wallet out on the staircase. However, reportedly due to damage to the doorknob, she was unable to leave the residence herself, and called police after realizing that she was trapped inside. Officers on the scene summoned the fire department. Firemen from Hotel Company were eventually able to gain access to the residence.?

Police also spoke to Mr. Abiff, who had a different account of key moments in the altercation. He confirmed that the pair were having a heated discussion that devolved into a physical altercation. However, he told police that his phone did not fall – rather, Valdez took his phone as he tried to leave during the argument, and slammed it on the ground, causing damage. He also recounted how Valdez asked him for money, and when he told her that she could not have the \$500 that was in his wallet, she began menacing him with a large kitchen knife, thrusting the weapon towards him while continuing to demand the money. Abiff said that he handed over the cash in fear of being injured, and tried again to leave after that, but his girlfriend reportedly would not let him. Valdez reportedly began to throw items at him before pushing him against the wall and ultimately out of the house through the front door.

Abiff said he pleaded for the return of his wallet and keys to no avail, before taking a rock that was next to the front door and hitting it against his girlfriend's doorknob multiple times. As he turned to leave, his wallet was tossed onto the ground from inside, he said, according to court documents. Abiff admitted to damaging the a/c unit outside the apartment. Police observed a laceration to his left middle finger.

?Ms. Valdez showed police video she had captured of Abiff damaging the a/c unit. She also, in the presence of police, returned the \$500 to Abiff that had been taken from his wallet. Officers confirmed that the pair have been in a relationship for approximately 18 months. Neither party wished to make a statement to the Domestic Violence Unit, and they were ultimately both arrested.

Valdez was charged with first-degree robbery, simple assault and destruction of property, both as acts of domestic violence, and disturbance of the peace. Abiff was charged with second-degree assault, simple assault, destruction of property, and disturbance of the peace, all as acts of domestic violence.?

They both appeared in court on Friday, where Magistrate Paula Norkaitis found probable cause to uphold all charges against Ms. Valdez and Mr. Abiff. For Valdez, bail was set at \$1,500, payable in full. If able to pay, she will be required to report to the probation office every week by telephone, and must stay at least 50 feet away from her boyfriend at all time, with no contact whatsoever between them.

Abiff was assessed bail in the sum of \$1000, also payable in full. He must also report to the probation office each week via telephone, and must maintain the same minimum distance and no contact with Valdez.

Their next court appearance is scheduled for August 16.

Editor's note: domestic violence is a serious issue in the Virgin Islands and across the nation. If you are seeking assistance in leaving or dealing with an abusive relationship, the Women's Coalition of St. Croix (24/7 Hotline 340-773-9272) and the Family Resource Center on St. Thomas 24/7 Hotline 340-776-7867) may be able to help.

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