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Man Accused of Strangling Ex, Stealing Phones, and Blocking Her Vehicle in Pursuit

Matthew Gumbs allegedly threatened to kill his ex-partner, stole her phones, and pursued her vehicle, leading to his arrest on charges of assault, grand larceny, and disturbance of the peace

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Mugshot of Mathew Gumbs. By. THE VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT

ST. THOMAS — A man who reportedly assaulted the mother of his child and stole her cell phones is currently facing several felony charges before the V.I. Superior Court.

According to court documents, last week, a woman went to police to report that she was assaulted by Matthew Gumbs, her ex-boyfriend with whom she had been in a relationship from 2017 to 2021. She told them that Gumbs called her in the evening of September 1, arguing about not

seeing his minor son. About half an hour after the telephone conversation, the woman said that Gumbs turned up at her residence, asking to see the child. She let him in.

Once inside, Gumbs reportedly turned aggressive, threatening to kill the woman due to his apparent belief that she is dating other people. She told police that Gumbs appeared intoxicated. At one point he grabbed her by the neck and began to squeeze, cutting off her air flow. In the presence of their toddler, he reportedly squeezed the woman's face before releasing her, questioning her about a man that she was with at her workplace.?

Gumbs reportedly began to leave but turned around and began to strangle his former partner once again. That prompted a physical altercation between the adults, while the 2-year old clung to his mother. The man left shortly after the second assault, and the woman said she reported the matter to the police the next day. Crime scene technicians photographed the abrasions she bore around her neck and nose.?

On the morning of September 5, the woman said that she was ordering food at an establishment near her workplace when Gumbs came up to her, angry that she was not returning his calls. Becoming increasingly irate, he then reportedly began tugging on her purse which was hanging from her forearm. The woman recounted how Gumbs eventually shoved his hand inside her purse and took off with her two iPhones, worth over \$850 in total. She appealed to police for assistance in locating and retrieving the devices, a request to which they agreed.

While officers were in Mariendahl conducting inspections for the missing phones, the woman was near Brookman Road, not close to the officers' location. She said Gumbs drove past and tossed a rock at her vehicle, but missed. This prompted her to leave the area, but Gumbs reportedly gave chase in his own car. When she called 911 for assistance, dispatchers directed her to travel to the Mariel C. Newton Command Police Station, but Gumbs reportedly cut in front of her vehicle, blocking her path. The woman said she instead decided to speed towards Walgreens, in what she knew would be a heavily populated area. Upon arrival, she dashed out of her vehicle, leaving the door open, and ran inside the establishment, where an employee secured her in a safe space until police arrived.

By the time she felt safe enough to return to her vehicle, her purse had disappeared. That same day, around 3:30 p.m. Gumbs's brother presented himself at the police station to return the woman's stolen phones and purse.

Police investigations led to a check of the surveillance cameras near the food establishment where the woman had her phones stolen. The footage corroborated her account of events. Police also discovered that she had filed – and was granted – a restraining order against Gumbs on September 5, the day of their second encounter.?

Gumbs turned himself into the Domestic Violence Unit on the morning of September 10, and was promptly arrested. After declining to provide a statement, he was charged with second-degree assault and simple assault as crimes of domestic violence. He was also charged with grand larceny and disturbance of the peace, and remanded into custody to await his advice of rights hearing.

In court on Wednesday, Magistrate Paula Norkaitis found probable cause to uphold all the charges against Gumbs, and set his bail at \$10,000, with a 10% provision, which was paid. Now, Gumbs must report to the probation office every week by telephone. He is prohibited from using alcohol or any controlled substances while the case is pending, and similarly banned from possessing firearms, ammunition, or dangerous weapons.

Gumbs is also restricted from the establishment in which he accosted the mother of his child, and is banned from going to her house or following her car. He will have one opportunity to retrieve personal belongings from the woman's residence, under escort from a police officer or court marshal.?

The next court appearance for Mr. Gumbs is scheduled for September 27.

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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