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Man Arrested for Burglarizing St. Croix Auto Repair Shop Where He Sought Job

After inquiring about employment, Jose Lopez Velasquez Jr. was later caught on surveillance footage breaking into the business, stealing items worth thousands, and admitting to selling the stolen goods for \$40

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Mugshot of Jose Lopez Velasquez Jr. By. THE VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT

ST. CROIX — A man who enquired about a job at an automotive repair shop was later arrested for burglarizing his prospective workplace.?

According to court documents, on the morning of September 7, police were summoned to a business establishment in Estate Friedansthal to investigate a reported burglary. Responding

officers spoke to the owner of the business, who said that he had closed up shop around 6:30 p.m. the previous evening. When he returned around 9:30 a.m., he found the office door closed, but unlocked.?

The office itself had been ransacked, the owner said; papers lay disorganized on his desk, and cabinet doors and drawers around the office stood open. The garage bay also appeared to have been rifled through. The business owner told police that two laptops were missing – a value of \$6000. Later on, the man amended his tally of stolen items to include an impact drill and impact gun as well.

Footage from the establishment's security cameras revealed a man arriving at the business location just before 4:30 a.m. on September 7. He was captured first entering one vehicle, then another, searching both before picking the lock on the office door and entering the building. The business owner told police that the man may have been someone who had approached him the previous day enquiring about a job.

Police took note of the damage to the office door, which bore tool marks between the edge of the door and the doorframe near to the lock. They also looked at the ransacked office and garage bay, and retrieved the video footage from the cameras in the business to continue their investigations.

?Some days later, the business owners contacted police to say that he had gotten in touch with the suspect, identified as Jose Lopez Velasquez Jr., who had agreed to return the stolen items. Before he could do so, however, Velasquez was reportedly arrested in connection with a separate burglary incident.

On September 14, officers on patrol came across Velasquez near Peter's Farm Road and invited him to come to the police station to provide them with a statement about the burglary at the automotive repair shop, to which he agreed.

At the police station, Velasquez reportedly told officers that on the day in question, he was under the influence of cocaine and attempting to hide from individuals who were looking for him. Not thinking straight, he said that he decided to hide in a vehicle that was in front of the repair shop. He admitted to entering two vehicles at the repair shop, but said that he took nothing from them. A wrench found on the floor served as the tool to break into the office. Velasquez recounted how he stood still inside the establishment for a few minutes before deciding to take a drill and vehicle scanner. He denied taking computers from the business.

Velasquez admitted to police that the business owner confronted him about returning the stolen items, but said that he had already sold them on for \$40, and thus needed time to earn enough to purchase replacements. No additional details were provided regarding the fate of the two laptops, valued at a total of \$6,000.

Velasquez was arrested and charged with grand larceny, third-degree burglary, and destruction of property, and remanded into custody to await his advice of rights hearing.

?In court on Monday, Judge Ernest Morris found probable cause to uphold all charges against Velasquez, and allowed him to sign an unsecured bond for the \$25,000 bail requirement. The judge also ordered that he abide by a 6 pm to 6 am curfew, and check into a local substance abuse rehabilitation treatment program.?

The next court appearance for Mr. Velasquez is scheduled for October 2.

