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Seatbelt Violation Leads to Arrest for Ghost Gun Possession Near St. Croix School

A routine traffic stop near Alfredo Andrews Elementary revealed an unregistered firearm and drugs, resulting in the arrest of James Thomas, who awaits trial under modified bail conditions

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Mugshot of James Thomas. By. THE VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT

ST. CROIX — A man was arrested after police reportedly discovered an unregistered firearm during a traffic stop search.

According to court documents, officers on patrol on Canaan Road last Tuesday afternoon noticed a white Toyota Corolla with no front license plate near the Mon Bijou traffic lights. Neither driver nor passenger were wearing seatbelts, police say, so a traffic stop was initiated, near the Alfredo

Andrews Elementary School.

As police approached the car, the driver – James Thomas – rolled the windows down and a strong smell of marijuana reportedly emanated from the vehicle. He reportedly told officers that all he had that would be of interest to them was “a lil weed,” and turned over a small transparent plastic bag containing marijuana, along with his license and vehicle registration and insurance documents.

Police asked Thomas to step out of the vehicle, and as he did so, an officer noticed a small backpack on the driver side floorboards. Inside the bag was a firearm, which forensics technicians later identified as being comprised of components from different manufacturers. The slide apparently belonged to a Glock 43, while the P80 tan receiver was from a 9mm “ghost gun”. The firearm also had a six-round magazine filled with 9mm ammunition, police say. The vehicle, when stopped, was just over 117 ft away from the elementary school.

Thomas reportedly admitted that the bag was his, and also reportedly admitted that he did not have a license to possess a firearm in the Virgin Islands, a fact that was later corroborated by VIPD’s Firearms Bureau.

Police say a quantity of hashish was also found inside the bag with the gun.

Thomas was arrested and charged with unauthorized possession of a firearm, possession of ammunition, operating a vehicle without wearing safety belts, and operating a vehicle without a front license plate. Unable to pay the \$50,000 bail requirement as initially assessed, he was remanded into custody to await his advice of rights hearing.

Tuesday's incident was not Thomas's first encounter with the law. [In December 2023](#), he was arrested for allegedly driving through a crime scene, almost running over several police officers.

In court on November 20, Magistrate Yolán Brow Ross found probable cause to uphold all charges against Thomas. She modified his bail to require a \$600 cash payment, with the remainder signed as an unsecured bond. The details of his pretrial release conditions have not been made public as of press time.

The next court appearance for Thomas is scheduled for December 4.