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Attempted Escape During Traffic Stop Leads to Firearm and Drug Charges for St. Croix Man

Officers recovered a modified ghost gun, ski mask, marijuana, and magazines containing over 60 rounds of ammunition in the suspect's backpack

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Mugshot of Jahnigh Gonsalves. By. THE VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT

ST. CROIX — A 21-year-old man who tried to flee the scene of a traffic stop was arrested after police reportedly found a firearm and ammunition in his backpack.

According to court documents, on Wednesday, officers on mobile patrol spotted a white pickup driving west down the Limetree Bay Terminal road. Neither driver (later identified as Jahnigh Gonsalves) nor passenger were wearing seatbelts, and so police initiated a traffic stop.

Upon approaching the vehicle, officers noticed, along with the strong odor of marijuana, a purple backpack on the seat next to Gonsalves. He told them the backpack was his, but he did not answer questions about what was inside. The officers informed Gonsalves and his passenger that they would check the vehicle to ensure that they were not carrying more than the legal amount of cannabis.

That's when Gonsalves reportedly tried to flee the scene, attempting to put the vehicle in gear and drive away. This reportedly prompted a scuffle with one officer, while the other officer heard the tussle and drew his weapon, fearing that Gonsalves was attempting to reach for a gun in the backpack. When the second officer realized what was actually happening, he ran to assist, helping to wrestle Gonsalves out of the truck.

A search of the backpack revealed a black handgun loaded with one round in the chamber and 17 in the magazine. There were two additional magazines, one loaded with 44 rounds of live ammunition, and the other a drum magazine of unknown capacity. Forensic technicians identified the firearm as an unmarked "ghost gun" equipped with an automatic fire conversion chip. A black ski mask was also found in the backpack, alongside 28 vials containing a substance that field-tested positive for marijuana.

When questioned, Gonsalves admitted to not having a license to possess firearms or ammunition in the Virgin Islands. He was arrested and charged with possession of a firearm and possession of ammunition. Unable to pay the initial bail requirement of \$50,000, Gonsalves was remanded into custody to await his advice of rights hearing which was scheduled for Friday.

As of press time, the outcome of Friday's court hearing has not been made available to the public.