

Traffic Stop on Queen Mary Highway Leads to Arrest and Discovery of Unlicensed Firearms

Police discovered two loaded firearms, including a pocket pistol, during a vehicle search under operation “Set De Tone.” Michael A. Smith, who lacked a license, was charged with unlawful possession of firearms and ammunition

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Mugshot of Michael A. Smith. By. THE VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT

ST. CROIX — Police officers on mobile patrol uncovered unlicensed firearms during a routine traffic stop on Thursday afternoon.

According to court documents, as part of operation “Set De Tone,” officers observed a gold Chevrolet truck traveling eastbound on Queen Mary Highway without a visible front license plate.

They initiated a traffic stop, bringing the vehicle to a halt near the Fast Way Service Station.

Upon approaching the truck, officers detected a strong odor of marijuana emanating from the vehicle. However, the driver, identified as Michael A. Smith, denied smoking or possessing marijuana inside the truck. Police noted that Smith's hands were trembling as he handed over his paperwork.

To verify that any marijuana present was within legal limits, officers conducted a search of the vehicle. Before beginning, they asked Smith to step out of the truck and submit to a pat down for officer safety. During the pat down, police discovered a firearm tucked into Smith's waistband. He admitted to not having a license to carry a firearm in the Virgin Islands.

A subsequent search of the truck revealed a backpack on the passenger seat containing another firearm. Forensic technicians identified the first weapon as a Taurus TH9 9x19 caliber handgun with an obliterated serial number on the receiver and slide. The firearm was loaded with 12 live rounds in the magazine and one round in the chamber. The second firearm, found in the backpack, was identified as a North American Arms Corp .22 caliber foldable pocket pistol, loaded with five live rounds in the cylinder. Smith reportedly provided verbal instructions to technicians on how to safely clear the pocket pistol for processing.

After confirming with the Firearms Division that Smith did not have a license to possess the weapons, police arrested him on charges of unlawful possession of a firearm, possession of ammunition, and possession of a firearm with no identifying marks. Unable to meet the \$50,000 bail requirement, Smith was remanded into custody.

Although an advice of rights hearing was scheduled for Friday, no publicly available documents have confirmed whether the hearing took place as of press time.