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Man Found Sleeping Outside Closed Bar in St. Croix Faces Firearm Charges

Ramon Gantier Jr. was arrested after officers found a loaded handgun in his bag and \$27,050 in his car. He lacked a valid firearm license. Magistrate set bail at \$50,000, allowing \$49,000 unsecured. Next court date is April 16.

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Mugshot of Ramon Gantier Jr. By. THE VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT

ST. CROIX — A man found sleeping near a closed bar in Peters Rest is now facing felony firearm charges following a police response to what was initially a trespassing call.

According to police, officers were dispatched to the establishment around 1:45 a.m. last Thursday, where they encountered Ramon Gantier Jr., who appeared to be highly intoxicated and was asleep

near a pool table on the patio at Cool Out Bar. The business was closed at the time, and the owner requested that Gantier be removed from the premises.

Officers noted that Gantier exhibited visible signs of intoxication, including slurred speech, incoherent behavior, and a strong odor of alcohol. After escorting him to the parking lot and locating his vehicle, officers offered to drive him home due to his condition. The owner of the business agreed to allow the vehicle to remain on the property until Gantier could return to retrieve it.

In an effort to secure his belongings, officers asked Gantier for access to the vehicle. After a brief search for the key, the bar owner recalled that Gantier had left a bag on the patio and went to retrieve it. Meanwhile, Gantier located the key in his pocket, allowing officers to open the vehicle.

Upon returning, the bar owner placed the bag on the driver's seat and made a hand gesture that officers reportedly interpreted as indicating the presence of a firearm. One officer picked up the bag and immediately noticed it had the weight and shape of a gun. A search revealed a 9mm Smith & Wesson handgun with an inserted magazine, as well as an empty 10-round magazine.

Gantier told officers the firearm belonged to a security company, and produced a wallet containing a firearm license under the company's name. However, police noted that the license did not list any specific weapon. Contact with the company's supervisor confirmed that the firearm in question did not belong to the company.

As a precaution, officers arranged for the vehicle to be towed. Before the wrecker arrived, a second bag was discovered in the back seat. Inside was \$27,050 in U.S. currency, which Gantier reportedly refused to discuss. A forensic technician later counted and confirmed the amount.

Further checks with the Firearms Bureau determined that Gantier does not hold a personal license to possess a firearm or ammunition. He was subsequently arrested and charged with unauthorized possession of a firearm and unauthorized possession of ammunition, and was remanded into custody pending his advice of rights hearing.

At that hearing on Friday, Magistrate Venetia Velazquez found probable cause to uphold the charges and set bail at \$50,000. Gantier was allowed to post \$49,000 as an unsecured bond, with the remaining \$1,000 required as a secured bond.

His next court appearance is scheduled for April 16.