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St. Croix Man Arrested After Allegedly Assaulting Stepdaughter and Forcibly Taking Children From Home

Police say Kendell Smith slapped and choked his 12-year-old stepdaughter, forced the children into his truck, and made violent remarks including that he would have stabbed her if she were older. The girl recorded videos capturing parts of the assault.

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Mugshot of Kendell Smith. By. THE VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT.

ST. CROIX — A St. Croix man has been taken into custody after police say he forcibly removed his young stepchildren from their home against their will and violently assaulted the eldest, a 12-year-old girl.

The incident began on Thursday afternoon, when officers were called after a 911 dispatcher received a report from the preteen, who said her stepfather, Kendell Smith, had slapped her and burst her lip. At the time, the children's mother was incarcerated, and their eldest sister was acting as guardian.

According to the affidavit, the sister had briefly left the house to go to a gas station. During her absence, Smith allegedly showed up despite being told the children did not want to leave with him. The 12-year-old later told officers that he grabbed her mouth with his fingers, picked up a length of PVC pipe, and then squeezed her neck until she wheezed. She said he threatened to kill her mother and older sister, then forced her, her 10-year-old sister, and 3-year-old nephew into his truck.

When the eldest refused to comply, Smith allegedly slapped her across the face. Fearful, she got in the vehicle. He then drove the children to his home, where the 12-year-old managed to call 911 and provide her sister's contact information.

The older sister told police that when she arrived to collect the children from Smith's residence, her younger sibling repeated the assault allegations. She said Smith became enraged, cursed at the child, and grabbed her shirt before she intervened. As the children left, Smith shouted that they were "all dead to him" and threatened his stepdaughter, reportedly saying that if she were older, he would have stabbed her in the throat. He also warned he had "guns ready" for when another sibling returned to the territory.

According to court documents, officers observed injuries consistent with the children's accounts, including swelling on the 12-year-old's cheek, a scratch on her chest, and two burst chains. The girl also showed police several videos she recorded during the confrontation in which Smith could be heard making threats, including references to putting her in the emergency room and having his gun ready. Both the 10-year-old sister and the older sister corroborated the accounts given to investigators.

When contacted by police, Smith admitted taking the children from their home but denied assaulting them. He reportedly acknowledged tapping his stepdaughter on the mouth, claiming her mouth was "hot" and that he only intended to stop her "yapping."

Smith was arrested and charged with second-degree assault, simple assault and battery, and destruction of property, all as crimes of domestic violence. He was also charged with disturbance of the peace and remanded into custody to await his first court appearance.

His advice of rights hearing was scheduled for Friday morning before Magistrate Yolan Brow Ross. As of press time, there was no record indicating the outcome of that proceeding.