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Citizen's Arrest Leads to Capture of Suspected Car Thief in Polyberg Hill

A quick-thinking coworker tracked down a stolen vehicle in Polyberg Hill and detained the suspect until police arrived. Officers later arrested Janijah Benjamin, charging him with unauthorized use of a vehicle and vehicle tampering.

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Mugshot of Janijah Benjamin. By. THE VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT.

ST. THOMAS — A suspected vehicle thief is now facing criminal charges after being detained by a vigilant citizen who spotted the stolen car and made a citizen's arrest over the weekend.

According to police, the incident unfolded Saturday night after officers were alerted that a stolen vehicle had been located in the Polyberg Hill area. When responding officers arrived, they met the

vehicle's owner, who explained how the car had been taken and ultimately recovered.

The man told police that in late October, his vehicle had been parked behind the Schneider Regional Medical Center, within the Virgin Islands Rescue parking lot. Although the car had been locked, he said the keys were left inside for "work-related accessibility." On Friday evening, the owner received a call notifying him that the vehicle was missing.

He immediately reached out to a coworker for help in locating it. The coworker told police that he began searching areas known to be frequented by abandoned or stolen vehicles. Around 8 p.m. Saturday, he spotted the missing car parked along Polyberg Hill.

According to the coworker's statement, a man was seen near the vehicle wiping down its surfaces. When approached, the individual fled into nearby bushes. The coworker then contacted both the vehicle's owner and the police. While waiting for them to arrive, he said the same man emerged from the bushes, at which point he detained him.

When officers arrived, both the vehicle's owner and his coworker identified the man — Janijah Benjamin — as the individual they saw in and around the stolen car. The owner confirmed that Benjamin did not have permission to use or operate the vehicle.

Benjamin was formally placed under citizen's arrest and transferred to police custody. He was later charged with unauthorized use of a vehicle and vehicle tampering, before being remanded to custody pending his advice of rights hearing.

In court on Monday, Magistrate Simone VanHolten-Turnbull found probable cause to uphold all charges against Benjamin. The judge allowed him to secure release by posting \$100 in cash toward a \$25,000 bail requirement ahead of trial.

As conditions of his release, Benjamin must report to the probation office twice weekly by telephone and adhere to a curfew from 6:30 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. daily. He is also prohibited from consuming alcohol, using controlled substances, or possessing firearms, ammunition, or any dangerous weapons. His next court appearance is scheduled for December 12.