

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Man Faces Child Abuse and Domestic Violence Charges After Alleged Ongoing Assaults

Investigators say a pattern of abuse came to light after teachers, neighbors, and police documented injuries on a 5-year-old child, leading to an arrest, hospital treatment, and strict release conditions ordered by the court.

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Mugshot of Jean Louis Gustave. By. THE VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT.

ST. THOMAS — A man is facing child abuse charges after reportedly admitting to beating a child with a belt as a form of discipline.

According to court documents, police were alerted to the issue on January 31, after a concerned citizen reported that a young elementary school student was likely being abused by Jean Louis Gustave. Officers from the Domestic Violence Unit were dispatched to investigate and spoke to a teacher at the child's school.

The teacher told them that she, too, had seen bruises on the child's neck and back. When asked, the child identified Gustave as the person who had inflicted the injuries. Other school officials also told police that they had seen marks on the child's body, "consistent with the outline of a belt," according to documents filed in court. The child was taken to the hospital where they were treated for abrasions to their neck, shoulder, side, and back.

The alleged abuse had been occurring for some time, investigators learned, and had reached such intensity that a neighbor had felt compelled to intervene out of fear for the child's safety.

Police later spoke to a second neighbor who told them that they had personally witnessed the child being beaten by Gustave, who had ignored their pleas to stop the assault. For his part, Gustave told police that the beatings were discipline for the 5-year old's "unruly" behavior.

He was arrested and charged with third-degree assault, along with aggravated assault & battery, both as crimes of domestic violence. Gustave was also charged with child abuse and disturbance of the peace, and first appeared before Magistrate Simon VanHoltent-Turnbull on Monday.

The judge found probable cause to uphold all charges against Gustave, and set bail at \$5,000, of which 11% must be posted in cash. Once released from detention, Gustave is required to report to the probation office twice a week in person, and along with the standard pre-trial release conditions must immediately contact the Department of Human Services to discuss custody of the child.

The next scheduled court appearance for Gustave is on February 20.