

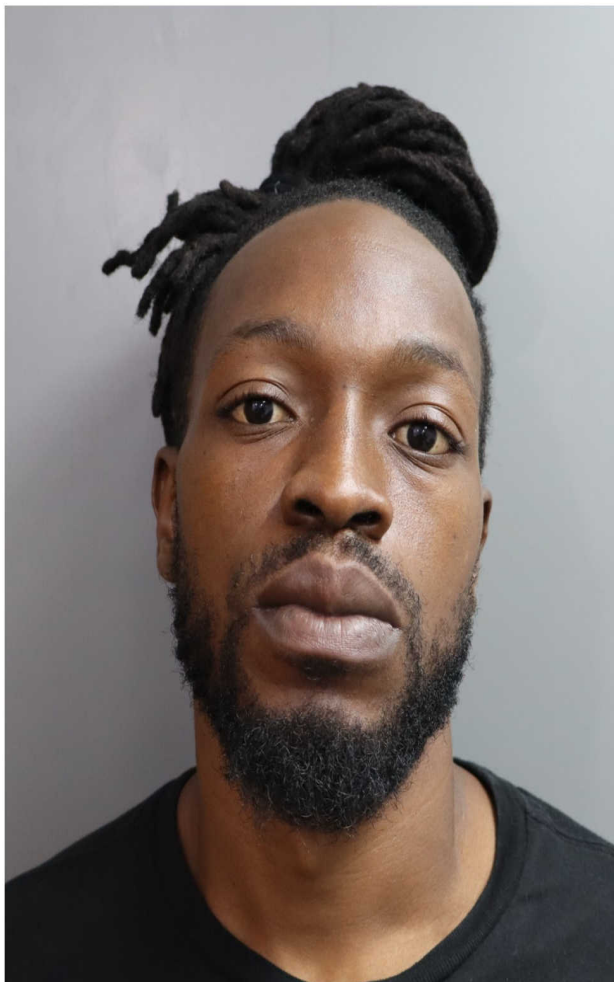
The Virgin Islands Consortium

Traffic Stop for Missing Plate in Frederiksted Leads to Gun Charges for Two Men

Police say a stop on Paradise Road for a missing rear license plate led to the discovery of two loaded firearms, marijuana and a ski mask inside an uninsured and unregistered Dodge Durango, resulting in charges against Mindo Byron and Mitche Matthew.

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Mugshots of Mindo Byron and Mitche Matthew. By. THE VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT.

ST. CROIX — A traffic stop in Frederiksted on Monday evening for a missing rear license plate ended with the arrest of two men after police said they found two loaded firearms,

marijuana and a ski mask inside an uninsured and unregistered SUV.

According to court documents, officers were traveling east on Paradise Road when they noticed that the white Dodge Durango in front of them had no rear license plate. Police initiated a traffic stop, and the vehicle pulled over near Adventure Hill.

When officers approached, the driver, identified as Mindo Byron, reportedly told them the vehicle was neither registered nor insured, apparently because of longstanding issues with the Bureau of Motor Vehicles. When police asked for his driver's license, Byron allegedly said he "technically" did not have one. He then showed officers a photo of an expired license on his phone, which reportedly indicated that the document had expired in 2021.

While Byron was speaking with one officer, police said his passenger was shifting constantly in his seat and appeared to be trying to conceal a bag on the floor behind his legs. The passenger was asked for identification and handed officers a card identifying him as Mitche Matthew. While police were checking Matthew's identification card, they reportedly overheard him mumbling to Byron in what appeared to be an effort not to be overheard.

After confirming that the SUV was uninsured and unregistered, officers informed Byron that the vehicle would be towed. He reportedly tried to retrieve a backpack from the back seat, but police stopped him from doing so.

When the wrecker arrived, officers began searching the vehicle before it was removed. According to court documents, that search turned up two cross-body bags. One reportedly contained a black firearm, while the other held a tan and black gun.

Police identified the first weapon as a 9mm Sig Sauer in a holster with 11 live rounds in a 12-round magazine. The second firearm was described as unbranded and without a serial number. Officers said it had a 13-round .40 caliber magazine attached, loaded to capacity with live rounds.

Court documents also say officers found just over one ounce of plant material that tested positive for marijuana, along with a multi-colored ski mask.

Byron reportedly told police he did not have a license to carry a firearm in the Virgin Islands. Officers said Matthew told them his application was in process but had not yet been approved. Matthew also reportedly admitted to his mother, who was present at the scene, that one of the firearms belonged to him.

Both men were arrested and charged with unlawful possession of a firearm and unlawful possession of ammunition. Byron also faces charges of operating a vehicle without a valid driver's license, operating a motor vehicle with no affixed license plate, and operating an uninsured vehicle.

Unable to meet the initial bail requirement of \$50,000, both men were remanded into custody pending their first court appearance.