

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Custody Exchange Turns Violent as Man Is Accused of Assaulting Mother of His Children

Police say Donteh Connell, 28, assaulted the mother of his children during a St. Croix custody exchange, choking her multiple times, taking her phones and yelling that she was making his life miserable, possibly over a recent Child Support Division letter

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Mugshot of Donteh Connell Sr. By. THE VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT.

ST. CROIX — A man is facing charges in Superior Court after police said the mother of his children reported that he attacked her during a custody exchange on St. Croix, choking her multiple times, taking her phones and threatening her safety before the

encounter ended.

According to the court documents, the incident happened on the morning of April 14 when she went to pick up her children from their grandmother's house. She told police that when she arrived, only one child was there, and she was told that Donteh Connell was on his way with their other minor child.

The woman said she took her youngest child to the car and secured the child in a car seat while waiting for Connell to arrive.

She told police that Connell arrived shortly afterward and that when he got out of his vehicle, his demeanor appeared unpleasant. As he approached, she said she locked her vehicle because she was familiar with what she described as his violent tendencies. In the rush, however, she reportedly did not realize that one of the back windows was open.

According to the woman, Connell pushed his hand through that open window and unlocked the back door.

After gaining access to the vehicle, she told police, Connell placed his hands around her neck and held her in a chokehold. She said he then unlocked the front door, dragged her from the vehicle and threw her to the ground, where he choked her again while yelling that she was making his life miserable.

The woman told police she believed his anger may have stemmed from a recent letter from the Child Support Division, or because he was overwhelmed by having to care for their child longer than expected.

She also reported that Connell grabbed one of her phones and walked back to his car with it. When she asked for it back, she said he came toward her again, grabbed her clothing and shook her forcefully.

The woman said she then tried to use her other phone to call a friend for help, but Connell allegedly began choking her again, took that phone as well and returned to his car with both devices.

She told police that she retreated to her own vehicle and waited quietly for several minutes, with one of the children still in the back seat.

Eventually, the woman said, Connell brought the other child to her along with some of the child's belongings. At that point, she said she grabbed him by his vest, tearing it in the process. He was able to break free and tried to run back to his vehicle, but she chased after him.

The woman recounted that while running away, Connell threw her phones to the ground. She said she stopped chasing him and retrieved the devices, one of which had been damaged.

Before the two separated, the woman told police that Connell threatened her safety when he saw her again.

She said the children and their grandmother witnessed the incident. According to the woman, the grandmother initially told Connell to stop the assault, but went inside the house after he ignored her.

Police said the woman's clothing was disheveled and stained with mud, which they said supported her account of a physical struggle.

Connell was not interviewed by police until Tuesday, April 21. According to police, he told officers that the mother of his children was delusional and described her accusations as false, denying her entire account of what happened on the morning of April 14.

Despite that denial, police arrested Connell and charged him with second-degree assault, simple assault and battery, and destruction of property as crimes of domestic violence. He was also charged with disturbing the peace by fighting and remanded into custody.

Connell was scheduled to appear before Magistrate Yolan Brow Ross on Wednesday morning. However, as of press time, the court's public records did not indicate whether that hearing had taken place.