

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Man Shot By Police After Attempting To Rob Off-Duty Officer

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ST. THOMAS -- An off-duty officer wound up shooting an assailant who attempted to rob him at gunpoint, after being fired upon several times, V.I.P.D. Media Specialist Sakeeda Freeman announced today.

According to Ms. Freeman, in the wee hours of Wednesday morning at about 3:46 a.m., officers responded to the robbery, which occurred in the vicinity of the Department of Labor (D.O.L.) on Kronprindsens Gade road. Upon arrival to the scene, contact was made with another off-duty officer, who stated that a fellow officer was robbed by an armed male individual while off duty.

The officer who almost became the victim of the gunpoint robbery, said that while travelling along Kronprindsens Gade, he stopped at the stop light near D.O.L. and was suddenly approached by a male on a bike, wearing all black and a black ski mask, who then pointed a black handgun to his face. According to this officer, the suspect told him to, "give it up," referring to a chain the officer was wearing, and then attempted to pull the chain off the officer's neck.

The suspect's efforts to remove the chain were unsuccessful, so the officer -- hoping to save his life, according to the release -- removed the chain and gave it to the suspect. The suspect then fled the scene through the D.O.L. area, and the officer left his vehicle and pursued him. The release says once making contact with the suspect, the officer revealed that he was a policeman, which prompted the suspect to point the gun towards the officer; firing several rounds.

The officer was able to take cover behind his vehicle, according to the release, which suggests that the officer did not have to travel far to catch up with the suspect, and he then fired several shots at the suspect, who was shot in the left leg and is still receiving treatment at the Roy Lester Schneider Hospital, according to the release.

The suspect was later identified as 26-year-old Vernon Rawlins of Solberg, St. Thomas.

Police say a fair and unbiased investigation into the matter is ongoing by the Criminal and Internal Affairs Bureaus, as it is a part of the force's procedure in a case such as this. The V.I.P.D. is also asking anyone with information about this incident to contact the Major Crimes at 340-714-9823 ext. 5617, Criminal Investigation Bureau at 340-714-9807 ext. 5556, Crime Stoppers or the Office of the Police Chief at 340-774-2211.