

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Man Sentenced To 3 Years In Prison For Robbery At Hooter's Restaurant

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ST. THOMAS -- A young man who robbed several patrons at gunpoint at Hooter's restaurant will be spending the next three years at the Bureau of Corrections, the Virgin Islands Department of Justice made known via press release Monday.

According to the release, Marc Thomas, 33, who accepted a plea agreement from Attorney General Claude Earl Walker was sentenced Monday by V.I. Superior Court Judge James Carroll III.

Thomas initially faced 28 charges – four counts of first-degree robbery, four counts of using a dangerous weapon during the commission of a robbery, four counts of second-

degree robbery, four counts of first-degree assault, four counts of using a dangerous weapon during the commission of a first-degree assault, four counts of grand larceny and four counts of using a dangerous weapon during the commission of a larceny – stemming from the May 2013 incident. He pleaded guilty on July 26 to one count of first-degree robbery, according to D.O.J.

In exchange, Attorney General Walker offered to dismiss the remaining counts against Thomas and recommended five years' incarceration with credit for the two years he has already served at the Bureau of Corrections, a \$1,000 fine and \$4,400 in restitution to the victims. AG Walker also proposed that Thomas be prohibited from going into the Hooter's restaurant in the future and that he has no contact with the victims.

At his sentencing hearing, Assistant Attorney General Eugene James Connor, Jr. reiterated the terms of the plea deal and requested that the court uphold those terms.

"This was a very serious incident," Connor said. "Luckily no one got hurt."

Thomas' attorney, Michael A. Joseph, described his client as "an exceptionally bright young man, an exceptionally skilled young man," but that he got into the wrong company after he was shot.

"Here is a kid who was doing extremely well and then got shot out of nowhere," Joseph said. "I think that changed him... and he felt he can hang with guys who can prevent that vulnerability."

Police arrested Thomas on May 5, 2013 after they responded to reports of a robbery in progress at Hooter's in Havensight. On arrival at the scene, according to an affidavit prepared by Det. Nigel James, police saw a gray Suzuki XL-7 leaving Buccanner Mall's parking at a high rate of speed. Det. James said he followed the vehicle, it struck a tree and some barricades on the side of the road adjacent to Hooter's, the driver fled from the disabled vehicle and ran toward the area of Wendy's in Mandela Circle, D.O.J. said.

Police officers chased after the suspect who was apprehended in the rear of Wendy's and taken into custody. He was later identified as Marc Thomas, according to Det. James.

Police later interviewed the patrons, who stated that while they were at the restaurant, four males wearing black clothing and black masks came into the restaurant, pointed guns at their heads and ordered them to go to the back of the restaurant, according to Det. James' affidavit to support Thomas' arrest. The suspects then took the patrons' cell phones, keys to a vehicle, money and jewelry, according to James.

An employee who was also interviewed said she hid behind the chairs in front of the bar, but one of the armed robbers found her and demanded from her the keys for the Video Lottery Terminal machines. She told him she did not have them; he then forced her to go to the back office and ordered her to empty three drawers of money into a bag, according to James.

Police retrieved three cell phones from Thomas, which two victims later identified as theirs. Thomas was subsequently arrested and charged on suspicion of robbery, according to James' affidavit.

At his sentencing hearing, Thomas apologized to his mother, his girlfriend and the courts.

“This was a wrongdoing; I shouldn’t have been there and done that... The situation I’m in has made me a better person. I hope there’s a better future for me. I want to do positive things and be the kind of person that I know myself to be,” he said.

His mother, Roslyn Thomas, also offered apologies to the court and said, “I can see he’s getting back on track.”

As he handed down his sentence – going along with the recommendations of the People – Judge Carroll said he has to look at the situation in “a balanced fashion.”

“Listening to you, you are very smart, well-spoken and sounds like you have some good in you,” Judge Carroll said. “Unfortunately, though, I have to look at the other side of the situation. I hope this will be a transformative situation for you.”

Following the sentencing, Thomas was immediately remanded into custody and escorted to the BOC.