

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Man Facing Minimum Of 15 Years In Jail Following Gun Possession Conviction

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ST. THOMAS -- Jurors empaneled to hear the trial of Mario Emanuel, above, convicted him of weapons charges in connection with a Jan. 23, 2016 incident. Following a day of testimony and about three hours of deliberation, the 12 men and women returned a unanimous verdict Thursday night finding Emanuel, 39, of Bournefield, guilty of both counts he faced – unauthorized possession of a firearm with obliterated identification marks and unauthorized possession of a firearm, the V.I. Department of Justice announced today.

In commenting on the outcome of the case, Attorney General Claude Earl Walker said, "Having been found guilty of possessing an unlicensed firearm with an obliterated serial

number, the Defendant, under Virgin Islands law, must serve a minimum of 15 years in jail without parole, so this case should help to deter others from possessing illegal guns in the Virgin Islands, and as DOJ is staffing up with prosecutors, we intend to continue to expend tremendous resources to prepare gun cases, such as this one, for trial to obtain convictions with significant jail time.”

According to the evidence presented at trial, officers of the Operation Restore Calm Task Force were patrolling the downtown area of Wimmelskaft Gade when they noticed a night club open after its normal operating hours. The officers went into the nightclub to investigate and while speaking to the manager, they noticed Emanuel sitting in a corner acting nervously. Emanuel resembled a suspect whom police had under surveillance. Later, outside the club, police officers stopped Emanuel as he was getting into a vehicle and asked him if he had anything in his pockets. Emanuel told the officers he had a gun, which officers found inside a sock. He was subsequently arrested on weapons charges.

Emanuel, who was on bail pending trial, was remanded to the Bureau of Corrections immediately after the jury rendered its verdict.

V.I. Superior Court Judge Michael Dunston, who presided over the trial, has set March 6 as the date for Emanuel’s sentencing.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant Attorney General Eugene James Connor, Jr. Emanuel’s run-ins with the law date as far back as 1997.