

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Man Sentenced To 7 Years For Armed Robbery Of Police Officer

Crime / **Published On January 27, 2017 10:44 PM /**

Staff **January 27, 2017**



ST. THOMAS -- A 21-year-old St. Thomas man has begun serving a seven-year prison today for last year's armed robbery of a police officer, V.I. Department of Justice Public Media Officer Corliss Smithen announced today.

According to the release, on Friday, V.I. Superior Court Judge Kathleen Mackay sentenced Vernon Rawlins of Kronprindsens Gade for first-degree robbery in connection with an April 27, 2016 incident that occurred in the area of Kronprindsens Gade. Rawlins was initially arrested on one count each of first-degree robbery, unauthorized use of a firearm during the commission of a robbery, first-degree assault, unauthorized use of a firearm during the commission of a first-degree assault, grand larceny, unauthorized use

of a firearm during the commission of a grand larceny, unauthorized possession of a firearm with altered identification marks and reckless endangerment.

He entered into a plea deal with prosecutors and pleaded guilty to first-degree robbery. As part of the plea agreement, all other counts against him were dismissed and Attorney General Claude Earl Walker recommended a nine-year prison sentence.

At his sentencing, Rawlins publicly apologized for his actions.

"I'm really sorry for what I've done and for putting my father and mother through this," he said. Judge Mackay then sentenced Rawlins to seven years behind bars with two years suspended and two years of supervised release, and ordered him to pay fees and court costs, while admonishing him. "I hope you've learned your lesson," Judge Mackay said.

"I hope when you're released from jail that you show the promise to those people who know you and who have vouched on your behalf."

An affidavit filed by Det. Nigel James provides the following details of the incident: The victim, Officer Nikita Turnbull, told investigators that sometime after 3 a.m., he left Carnival Village and was heading to Sub Base. He was being followed by two other officers, who drove behind him in separate vehicles. While driving along Kronprindsens Gade, Officer Turnbull stopped at the traffic light in the area of the Department of Labor. A masked man, later identified as Rawlins, who was riding a bicycle, pointed a gun at Officer Turnbull's head and demanded that he take off his gold neck chain. Then, Rawlins reached into Officer Turnbull's vehicle and tried to remove the chain. Fearing for his life, Officer Turnbull took off his chain and gave it to Rawlins, Det. James wrote.

As Rawlins tried to leave the area, Officer Turnbull came out of his vehicle, identified himself as a police officer and ordered Rawlins to stop. Rawlins then turned and pointed the gun at Officer Turnbull. Officer Turnbull returned to his vehicle, drew his firearm and fired several times at Rawlins. Officer Turnbull sought cover at the rear of his vehicle while Rawlins was still pointing his gun at him, so Officer Turnbull fired more shots. After the shooting had died down, police officers who responded to reports of the incident found Rawlins at the rear of the Department of Labor. Police officers retrieved Officer Turnbull's jewelry, a ski mask and a gun near Rawlins. Rawlins had suffered gunshot injuries to his foot and he was taken to Schneider Hospital, according to Det. James.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant Attorney General Nadja Harrigan.