

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Man Gets Fifteen Years Without Parole For Gun Possession

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ST. THOMAS -- Fifteen years without parole was the punishment meted out to Mario Emanuel for gun possession, V.I. Department of Justice Public Media Officer Corliss Smithen announced this afternoon.

Satisfied with the outcome, Attorney General Claude Earl Walker said his office will continue the aggressive campaign it has launched to rid the streets of guns.

"He's exactly the kind of person that needs to be off the streets of St. Thomas," Mr. Walker said, referring to Mr. Emanuel's criminal history, which spans for more than a decade.

V.I. Superior Court Judge Michael Dunston handed down the sentence today, almost a month and a half after a jury found the 39-year-old Kronprindsens Gade man guilty of one count each of unauthorized possession of a firearm with obliterated identification marks and unauthorized possession of a firearm.

Prosecutors had recommended a 20-year prison term for Mr. Emanuel. Judge Dunston, however, sentenced Mr. Emanuel to 15 years without parole for unauthorized possession of a firearm with obliterated identification marks and two years and six months for unauthorized possession of a firearm. Both sentences are to run concurrently.

On Jan. 19, a 12-member jury unanimously convicted Mr. Emanuel of the two counts, following a day of testimony and about three hours of deliberation.

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 in speaking to the manager, they noticed Mr. Emanuel sitting in a corner and acting nervously. Mr. Emanuel resembled a suspect whom police were on the lookout for. Later outside the club, police officers stopped Mr. Emanuel as he was getting into a vehicle and asked him if he has anything in his pockets. Mr. Emanuel told the officers he had a gun, which officers found inside a sock. He was subsequently arrested on weapons charges.

Mr. Emanuel's run-in with the law dates as far back as 1997 and includes at least six gun-related charges.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant Attorney General Eugene James Connor, Jr.