

The Virgin Islands Consortium

St. Croix Man Facing 5-Year Sentence, \$250k Fine For Unlawful Possession Of Firearm In School Zone

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ST. CROIX -- United States Attorney Gretchen C.F. Shappert announced today that Samuel Melendez age 43, of St. Croix pleaded guilty on July 23 in federal court to unlawful possession of a firearm in a school zone.

According to court documents, on October 8, 2018, V.I.P.D. officers responded to the H & R Supermarket in Frederiksted after receiving a report concerning an individual brandishing a firearm. Mr. Melendez was located in the vicinity of the Frederiksted Vegetable Market in possession of a .380 operable firearm. Reportedly, officers discovered the weapon in Mr. Melendez's waistband as they conducted a pat-down search. The firearm contained one chambered round of ammunition.

Mr. Melendez did not have a license to possess the firearm. Upon further investigation, law enforcement officers learned that the location where Mr. Melendez was found in possession of the gun was within 1,000 feet of the St. Patrick's Elementary School, a violation of federal law.

He faces up to five years imprisonment for the offense, a fine of up to \$250,000.00, and forfeiture of the firearm and ammunition. A sentencing date has been set for November 21, 2019.

The case was investigated by the Virgin Islands Police Department and Homeland Security Investigations. It is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Melissa P. Ortiz.

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