

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Man Arrested After Police Say Stolen Car Parts Were Found on His Ridgeline; Judge Tosses Felony Charge

Police arrested Christopher Charles after VINs on parts installed on his Honda Ridgeline matched another man's vehicle, but a judge later dismissed the stolen-property charge for lack of probable cause. Several traffic-related charges remain pending.

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The VIPD has not yet released a mugshot of the suspect. This story will be updated if one is provided.

ST. CROIX — A man was arrested after police said multiple parts installed on his Honda Ridgeline carried vehicle identification numbers matching another man's truck, but the

most serious charge against him was dismissed the following day after a magistrate found insufficient probable cause.

Police were called to a residence in Mount Pleasant on Thursday morning following reports of an ongoing dispute. At the scene, officers met a man who said he had noticed a black Honda Ridgeline parked nearby that closely resembled his own vehicle. On closer inspection, he believed the truck was fitted with parts that had previously been stolen from his Ridgeline of the same make and model.

The man told police he called out in an effort to locate the driver, and Christopher Charles identified himself as the owner of the parked truck. Mr. Charles reportedly agreed to allow the man to inspect beneath the hood.

According to police, the man examined a VIN sticker under the hood and said the number matched the VIN belonging to his own Ridgeline. The rear trunk hatch door on Mr. Charles' vehicle was also determined to carry a VIN associated with the other man's truck. The man then accused Mr. Charles of possessing his stolen property, prompting a verbal dispute.

When questioned by officers, Mr. Charles reportedly said he had purchased the Ridgeline several months earlier from a man through Facebook and had recently registered and transferred the vehicle into his name. He told police he no longer had a way to contact the seller.

Mr. Charles provided officers with a New York City driver's license, which police deemed invalid for local driving purposes because he had been residing in the territory for more than four months. Officers also determined that the license plate displayed on the Ridgeline did not belong to that vehicle, but instead was registered to an older Ridgeline also owned by Mr. Charles.

A subsequent check with the Bureau of Motor Vehicles showed that the vehicle equipped with the disputed parts was neither registered nor insured and was listed as "turned-in" in the BMV database. Police said the registration information Mr. Charles presented was not current.

After officers matched the VINs on the suspected stolen parts to the other man's Ridgeline, Mr. Charles' vehicle was seized and towed. He was arrested and charged with buying, receiving or possessing stolen property, driving an unregistered vehicle, operating an uninsured vehicle, unlawfully transferring license plates, and failing to have registration information in his possession or inside the vehicle.

Mr. Charles was remanded into custody and appeared before Magistrate Yolan Brow Ross on Friday for an advice-of-rights hearing. During that proceeding, Magistrate Ross found no probable cause to support the stolen-property charge and dismissed it.

The remaining charges were allowed to proceed. Bail was set at \$500 fully unsecured, and Mr. Charles was released from custody pending his next court appearance on September 30.