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## Homeless Man Arrested For Allegedly Stealing VI WAPA Vehicle, Burglarizing a Bar and Stealing Nearly \$5,000 From Slot Machines

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**Mugshot of Vaughn Lee McHargue** By. THE VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT

ST. THOMAS — A homeless man on St. Thomas was charged with burglary in the third degree, grand larceny, unauthorized use of a vehicle, and possession of stolen property, after allegedly stealing a V.I. Water and Power Authority vehicle, burglarizing La Delicia Bar in Estate Contact, and stealing \$4,700 from the slot machines.

The suspect, Vaughn Lee McHargue appeared Judge Henry Carr via teleconference in the custody of the Bureau of Corrections on Friday for his advisement hearing. He had two cases against him, so Judge Carr heard arguments and made a ruling on both cases simultaneously.

According to the probable cause fact sheets, a four-door blue Ford Escape registered to WAPA's Krum Bay Plant was last parked at the Petrus Plaza on Veterans Drive by WAPA employee Orville James on Wednesday, June 9, at about 4:30 pm. James left the key within the vehicle. Another employee, Chevante Marsh, was designated to pick up the vehicle but didn't get an opportunity to do so that day, one fact sheet said.

The suspect, according to the facts of the case, allegedly committed two other crimes upon La Delicia Bar prior to police responding to an activated alarm at 4:35 am on Thursday, June 10. McHargue, identified by the establishment's video surveillance driving a stolen vehicle, broke into the business, damaged the doors, ransacked the establishment, and stole a total of \$4,700 from the slot machines after forcing several open.

Later that day at about 4:44 pm, WAPA's security manager Joseph Cranston, Jr. received a call from Sergeant C. Espirit inquiring about a missing vehicle. Indeed, the vehicle was missing from Petrus Plaza and was tracked and located in the Annas Fancy area, according to the fact sheet. Around 5:15 p.m., three officers traveled to Altona and Welgunst, in the area of the Jewish Graveyard and identified the vehicle by its tags.

They observed McHargue walking towards the stolen vehicle. The suspect attempted to hide from police; however, he was apprehended after shouting that he had a gun. The fact sheet does not state that one was retrieved from the suspect's person.

The key to the vehicle was turned over by McHargue, and he voluntarily confessed to all burglaries he committed since his last release from jail.

"He's had contact with the criminal justice system since 1987," Attorney John Barraco said. "There's multiple convictions including crimes of violence, lots of theft and burglary, and he pled guilty as recently as April 7, 2021 to an unlawful entry."

Barraco listed many more offenses and convictions and stated that he believes that the suspect is a danger to the community based on his extensive rap sheet in the territory and the mainland.

According to Judge Carr, McHargue last appeared before the court on a burglary charge. That case is still pending, according to Judge Carr. The suspect affirmed it to be true.

The defense's representation Attorney Julie Todman argued that her client's bail be set at an unsecured bond of \$500 since he is homeless and would be unable to post a higher bail, thus leading to his further incarceration until trial.

Judge Carr denied Attn. Todman's proposed bond amount and said that based on McHargue's substantial contact with the justice system, he doesn't have any confidence that if lenient in this matter and easily allowed the suspect to be released from custody that he "would not run afoul of the law," the judge said.

For both cases, a cumulative bail of \$25,000 (with the ability to post 10 percent or a combined \$2,500) was set, and McHargue must remain in the St. Thomas/ St. John jurisdiction if released on bail. Additionally, he cannot be released unless he has a suitable third-party custodian, which the court recognized may be difficult since he is homeless. If released, he will be subjected to a 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. curfew, Mondays through Fridays, and house arrest on the weekends.

Judge Carr also found probable cause for the following:

- Lotitia Donovan-Percel was charged with Simple Assault and Battery/ DV, in violation of Title 14. V.I.C. Subsection 299(2) and Title 16. V.I.C. Subsection 91(v)(1) & (2); and Disturbance of the Peace/ DV, in violation of Title 14. V.I.C. Subsection 622(1) and Title 16. V.I.C. Subsection 91(b)(1). Bail was set at \$500 (unsecured), so the \$1,000 Percel previously posted will be returned to her. She was advised to maintain employment with the VIPD and was prohibited from possessing a firearm.
- Rafael A. Ledesma German was charged with Leaving the Scene of an Accident, in violation of Title 14. V.I.C. Subsection 1389 and Operating a Vehicle without a Valid License, in violation of Title 20. V.I.C. Subsection 371(a). Bail was paid in the amount of \$7,500 and he was released prior to his advisement hearing. German was advised to surrender his original Dominican Republic passport, submit a copy of his work visa, and submit verification (lease or rent receipt) of his current residence by the close of business on Friday. A third-party custodian and curfew were not required. He was also ordered to provide the plate number and location of the vehicle to aid the VIPD in their investigation of hit-and-run collision.