

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Police Officer Flees Housing Community After Multiple Shots Were Fired at Him; Arrest Made on Weapons Charges

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ST. THOMAS — A St. Thomas man was charged with two counts of possession of a firearm, possession of ammunition, and possession of a machine gun in connection with a shooting in the vicinity of the Oswald Harris Court housing community on Thursday, July 22 which led to the confiscation of two firearms, ammunition and a confession.

E'Jaiey Grant, 24, appeared via teleconference from the Bureau of Corrections before Judge Carolyn Hermon-Percell on Monday for his advisement hearing. This was Grant's first contact with the criminal justice system as he has no criminal record.

According to the fact sheet, officers were patrolling and inspecting the Oswald Harris Court area on July 22 at around 11:30 pm in connection with another investigation. When Detective Brian Bedminster made it to building 3, he observed a dark-skinned male firing a gun. When the officer exited his vehicle to challenge the male, he heard additional gun shots being fired from an automatic weapon.

At this point, the detective quickly returned to his vehicle and exited the housing area. The dark-skinned male was observed shooting at the officer and striking his vehicle, the fact sheet said.

E'Jaiey-Grant Mugshot of E'Jaiey Grant, who was arrested and charged with two counts of possession of a firearm, possession of ammunition, and possession of a machine gun in connection with a shooting in the vicinity of the Oswald Harris Court on Thurs. July, 22, 2021. (Credit: VIPD)

Shortly after this incident, Criminal Investigation Units, Zone A Patrol Units and Forensics arrived at the scene. The chief's office received a tip that the shooters ran into the suspect's residence of occupancy. The address was confirmed to be that of Grant, by a Notice to Quit retrieved from the Virgin Islands Housing Authority the following day.

On July 23, Deputy Chief Velazquez and several members of the US Marshals, Alcohol Tobacco, and Firearm, and VIPD's Criminal Investigation Unit and Forensics went to the suspect's apartment. The suspect and another male were present at the apartment. A protective sweep was conducted of the apartment for the officers' safety. In the process, officers observed an unspent cartridge, a rifle magazine, and a black pistol rifle. Chief Velazquez asked the suspect and his guest if either have a license to carry a firearm and they both said "no," according to the fact sheet. At this point, officers needed a search warrant to search the remainder of the apartment and received permission telephonically by Judge Hermon-Percell.

Both Grant and the male guest were transported to the Criminal Investigation Bureau and interviewed. Grant gave a recorded video statement and confessed to being the sole owner of the two firearms recovered inside of his residence. Therefore, his guest was not charged. Grant, on the other hand, was arrested and bail was set at \$50,000.

At the advisement hearing, Attorney Andy Johnson argued that one of the weapons was not an automatic but semi-automatic weapon, as a challenge to probable cause for the possession of a machine gun charge.

According to the sworn testimony of Detective Delberth Phipps, Jr., pursuant to Title 14 V.I.C. Subsection 2253(d)(2), a machine gun is "a firearm that is capable of discharging more than 12 rounds at any particular time without reloading," he said.

After hearing Det. Phipps' testimony, Judge Hermon-Percell was convinced that the charge of possession of a machine gun—as outlined in the VI Code and by definition in the testimony of the detective—should be upheld.

Attn. Johnson also claimed that \$9,900 was seized but was not mentioned in the probable cause fact sheet. Deputy Chief Velazquez, one of the officers who conducted the search of the apartment, was not present at the hearing to give testimony to the evidence that was recovered.

The presiding judge told the court that after the search warrant was executed, a filed return is required that will include details of what was recovered within 14 days. "At that point, then you could question if something that you believe should have been listed is not," Judge Hermon-Percell said in response to Attn. Johnson's allegations.

Considering Grant a flight risk and a danger to the community, Judge Hermon-Percell ordered the following conditions of release:

- \$50,000 bail (with provision to post 10 percent or \$5,000)
- Surrender all travel documents, including driver's license
- Identify a third-party custodian that he must reside with
- 6 pm to 6 am curfew