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Man Facing 20 Years in Prison for Gun He Claims He Found on Roadside

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Mugshot of Raheem Christian By. V.I. POLICE DEPARTMENT

ST. CROIX — A 28-year-old man could face up to 20 years in prison and a \$25,000 fine after being found in possession of an unlicensed firearm.

Raheem Christian appeared before Judge Ernest Morris Jr. for a virtual advisement hearing on Friday where he was informed that he is facing three charges: carrying an unlicensed firearm, carrying an unlicensed firearm in a vehicle and authorized possession of ammunition.

According to the probable cause fact sheet, at about 12 noon on September 23, officers investigating an unrelated matter in Estate Pearl observed as a black, heavily tinted two-door Honda Accord come to an abrupt stop. According to police, while they continued to drive slowly

towards the vehicle, it did not move. The officers then positioned their police vehicle at an angle towards the Honda Accord and activated their blue emergency lights. One officer subsequently approached the vehicle where he found a driver and a front seat passenger who was later identified as Raheem Christian. The officer also reported noticing a strong odor of what appeared to be marijuana and observed a pre-rolled marijuana in a bowl in the cup holder. Both occupants were subsequently ordered to exit the vehicle, and they complied with the instructions.

When the officer questioned whether they had any narcotics, the male occupants reportedly replied, "Just some weed right there." According to the officer, upon opening the passenger door to retrieve the marijuana, he observed a black handgun grip inside of a black gun holster in the center console, in plain view. When asked whether they had a license to possess the weapon, both men replied no. The officer subsequently advised them that they would be placed under arrest, and according to the probable cause fact sheet, Christian told the driver "Just say it's yours, take it", to which the driver did not respond. A forensic technician present at the scene identified the firearm as a 9mm Smith & Wesson model 195 handgun, with one live round in the chamber and eleven live rounds in its magazine. Police also recovered what appeared to be a marijuana cigarette, a small ziplock containing a brown substance and a digital scale.

Both men were transported to V.I. Police Department Operations Building #45 Mars Hill, where they provided statements. The driver of the vehicle stated that Christian reached out to him to pick him up from work to "go smoke a joint and cool out." He said after meeting, they drove toward Cane Garden and pulled over as Christian wanted to use the bathroom. The driver claims that when he turned the car around, he observed Christian returning to the vehicle with a gun which he placed in the center console.

According to the driver, he questioned what Christian was doing with the weapon, to which Christian allegedly replied that he found it next to a muffler on the dirt road. The driver further told police that while Christian tried to make him take the fall for the handgun, he could not do that as he did not know where the gun came from. During his interview, Christian also claimed to have found the gun and picked it up. He said he and the driver began to leave the area and that they were trying to contact a police station to turnover the weapon. Nevertheless, Christian was arrested and charged, while the driver was released.

Unable to post bail which was set at \$50,000 Christian was remanded to the Golden Grove Adult Correctional Facility.

At Friday's hearing, Public Defender Amelia Joseph requested that Christian be subjected to house arrest with provisions for him to continue working. However, given that Christian has a previous conviction, Assistant Attorney General Karabo Molyneux- Molloy contended that bail should remain fully secured at \$50,000, and that the defendant abide by a 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. curfew.

Judge Morris subsequently concluded that Christian could be released on the posting of \$5,000 cash and that he and his approved third-party custodian must sign an unsecured bond for the remaining \$45,000. While the defendant will be placed under house arrest, provisions have been made for him to remain gainfully employed. As such, Christian will only be allowed to leave his place of residence to go to work, access medical care, meet with his attorney, report to the probation office or attend any scheduled court appearances.

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