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Man Who Allegedly Disregarded Police Orders and Took Off Running to Dispose Firearm Facing 18 Years

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Mugshot of Lawrence Hodge. By. THE VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT

ST. CROIX — A St. Croix man could face a cumulative maximum sentence of 18 years in prison after he was found with an unauthorized firearm which he attempted to dispose of during a police encounter.

Lawrence Hodge is charged with carrying an unlicensed firearm which carries a maximum penalty of 10 years imprisonment, as well as unauthorized possession of ammunition which could land him 7 years behind bars. Hodge also faces an additional charge of interfering with an officer discharging his duty, an offense which is punishable by a maximum incarceration of 1 year.

The probable cause fact sheet states that on September 25th, officers were on foot patrol on King Cross Street, Christiansted when they observed an unknown male rolling a green leafy substance that appeared to be marijuana. According to police, they verbally commanded the individual, later identified as Hodge, to stand up and face the wall so they could pat him down. While he initially stood and acted as if he would face the wall, police say the man instead took off running. Officers who subsequently gave chase reported seeing him holding on to the right side of his waistband and later removing a solid object which he tossed towards a stone wall and fence area. Officers continued their chase until the man eventually complied with orders to show his hands and get down on his knees. He reportedly told police, "I only run because you was going to lock me up for a joint!"

An officer then handcuffed Hodge and informed him about the marijuana laws of the Virgin Islands. According to the fact sheet, the officer explained that "he cannot be arrested for a marijuana cigarette because it is decriminalized. However, it is still illegal."

The officer then examined the area where they initially saw Hodge seated and observed a black gun holster. A search of the area where he tossed the unknown object would then reveal a silver and black handgun. A forensic technician called to process the scene identified the weapon as a 9mm Smith & Wesson with one live round in the chamber and fourteen live rounds in the magazine. While Hodge confessed to police that he did not have a license for the weapon, he claimed that he was in possession of it because he is a self-employed construction worker who carries a lot of money around. He was subsequently arrested, charged and remanded to the Golden Grove Adult Correctional Facility after failing to post bail set at \$50,000.

At his advisement hearing on Monday, Attorney Kathryn Slade requested that Hodge be allowed to post 10 percent of the bail figure and sign a bond for the remainder. She proposed that the bond also be signed by an identified third-party custodian into whose care the defendant could be released.

Assistant Attorney General Karabo Molyneaux- Molloy contended that if the defendant were to be granted release on the 10 percent provision, he should be placed on a 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. daily curfew. Attorney Slade noted her objection to the suggested curfew, stating that it was too restrictive, considering that Hodge works from 7:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on weekdays. In supporting her position, Molyneaux- Molloy stressed that weapons charges must be taken seriously because of the rash of violent crimes, and that 30 minutes is sufficient time for Hodge to get to and from work anywhere on island.

Despite this argument, Senior Sitting Judge Darryl Donohue Sr. concluded that a 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. curfew would be sufficient. Hodge was subsequently granted release under that condition and on the posting of \$5,000 cash. The defendant and his custodian must both sign an unsecured bond in the amount of \$45,000 and Hodge is required to surrender his passport.