

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Two Men Found Near Scene of Fortuna Murder Arrested on Firearm, Ammunition and Drug Possession Charges

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From left to right, mugshot of Cameron Francis and Robert Collins.

ST. THOMAS — Two men found in the vicinity of a bullet-riddled body have been charged with various offenses relating to firearm, ammunition and marijuana possession.

Cameron Francis, age 30 and Robert Collins Jr., age 34 are both charged with constructive possession of a firearm, possession of an unlicensed firearm, possession of ammunition, possession of marijuana, possession with intent to distribute and possession of drug paraphernalia.

The pair was arrested on November 23 after officers received reports of [several gunshots being fired in the Fortuna area](#) at approximately 5:44 am. The responding officers later discovered an unresponsive male who appeared to have been shot multiple times. The individual who was found on a path through some bushes, was pronounced dead at the scene. Several individuals reported that after hearing the gunshots they saw a white or silver-colored vehicle leaving the area.

Officers inspected the area where the body was found and observed a white vehicle with two males who they described as suspicious. The two men were ordered out of the vehicle as police sought to determine why they were in the area. They were patted down and the officers subsequently approached the vehicle where they noted a strong smell of marijuana. They discovered a jar with a green leafy substance that later tested positive for marijuana and weighed in at 1.36 ounces.

Further inspection of the vehicle would also reveal an extended .9mm magazine with the capacity to hold 30 rounds. A backpack found on the front passenger side revealed a Glock 17 .9 mm pistol with 17 rounds in the magazine, while a second backpack found in the backseat contained a small scale and several zip lock bags as well as an additional .08 ounces of marijuana.

Initially, the passenger of the vehicle identified as Robert Collins Jr. and the driver, identified as Cameron Francis both denied ownership of the firearm and ammunition. However, according to the probable cause fact sheet, Collins later claimed ownership of the backpack containing the scale and marijuana while Francis claimed ownership of the firearm, marijuana and magazine. The fact sheet notes that Francis said that he was reluctant because he is not the only person with access to the vehicle. However, he refused to disclose who else had access.

At their joint advisement hearing on Wednesday, Assistant Attorney General Brenda Scales recommended that bail be set in the amount of \$50,000 each, given that the various offenses carry maximum sentences ranging from 1 to 20 years. Judge Henry Carr agreed that the gravity of the charges and the lengthy sentences may give the defendants thoughts of fleeing.

Cameron Francis' bail was later set at \$50,000 with an allowance for release on the posting of 10 percent thereof. He will be subject to a flexible curfew dependent on his work schedule, which must be submitted to the court weekly. Francis will be granted one hour to travel to work and one hour to return home after his shift. On any day where he is not working, he must remain under full house arrest.

Meanwhile, attorney Robert King who represented only Robert Collins Jr. argued that there was no need for his client to be subjected to similar restrictions as there was no indication he posed any danger to the community apart from the nature of the charges. He asked that Collins Jr. be released on his own recognizance or that the court accept the posting of property owned by his parents as security. However, Scales stressed that the case may not just be a simple possession of firearms matter, highlighting that the co-defendants were found in the vicinity of a dead body. Scales also highlighted that they were found in a vehicle the same color as the one witnesses reported seeing.

The judge stated that there was not enough to tie the defendants to the dead body at this stage and that they have not been charged with any offenses of that nature. Nevertheless, he indicated that there must be a financial component to the bail because of the seriousness of the charges and that he saw no need to differentiate conditions between the two men.

Collins Jr.'s bail was thus set at \$50,000 with the same 10 percent provision or the posting of property for the full sum. He has been placed on a 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. curfew on weekdays and house arrest on weekends. The judge did note that the court is willing to modify the curfew when the defendant returns to work after his current disability status is lifted.