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# Man Enters Bar in St. Thomas and Starts Swinging Machete at Patrons

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**Mushot of Miguel Encarnacion. By. THE VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT**

**ST. THOMAS** — A machete-wielding bar patron has been charged with third degree assault and reckless endangerment after a disturbance on Saturday Night.

Miguel Encarnacion also faces charges of disturbance of the peace and carrying or using a dangerous weapon during a crime of violence. The latter offense is punishable by a minimum of 15 years in prison.

He was arrested after an individual called police to report that someone was trying to kill a person at a bar in Gamble Gade. Upon arrival police found several people outside the bar yelling at a Hispanic male who was being held back by another man. Inside the bar, a woman told police that

she had taken a machete from the man later identified as Miguel Encarnacion and placed it behind the bar for safekeeping. She explained that Encarnacion came into the business and was asked to leave after he started cursing at people. He then stated that he was going for a weapon to come back and returned in a matter of minutes, drawing a machete from his waist.

According to the woman, Encarnacion started to wield the machete and patrons started to move around to avoid getting struck. While a man tried to remove him from the bar Encarnacion pushed his way around the man and continued to yell at other patrons while swinging the machete. A second individual then picked up a bar stool and attempted to knock the machete out of Encarnacion's hand and push him out the door. Though he was unsuccessful in disarming him, he was able to push him outside. Still armed, Encarnacion allegedly ran back into the bar swinging the weapon at anyone in his path. A bar patron then tried to talk him out of his rage while another individual threw two glass bottles which struck Encarnacion in the head. This caused him to become slightly disoriented and other patrons subsequently tackled him to the ground and disarmed him. He continued putting up a fight and was escorted out of the bar.

The probable cause fact sheet notes that surveillance footage from the establishment confirmed the account provided to police. Encarnacion, who was still outside arguing, was detained for questioning. When he calmed down he told officers that he didn't do anything wrong and claimed that the person swinging the machete was not him. However, when asked where he got the machete he stated that he uses it for his job to cut grass. He was later arrested and charged.

On Monday, Encarnacion appeared virtually before judge Paula Norkaitis for a bail hearing. Attorney Julie Todman told the court that the defendant was born in the Dominican Republic but has been residing in St. Thomas for 7 years and has family in the territory. She noted that he had no prior contact with the justice system. While Todman asked that Encarnacion be released on an unsecured bond valued at \$2,500 Assistant V.I. Attorney General Brenda Scales requested that bail remain at \$25,000 as set at the time of his arrest.

After considering the arguments and taking into account the nature of the charges and the weight of the evidence, the judge set bail at \$25,000 with no 10 percent provision. Norkaitis noted that she finds Encarnacion to be "an extreme danger to the community." If he is able to post bail, upon his release he will be subject to a 7:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. curfew. The defendant is prohibited from going to the bar where the incident took place and must have no contact with any of the witnesses in the matter.