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Massachusetts Man on Vacation in St. Thomas Arrested on Assault Charges For Allegedly Strangling Girlfriend

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Mugshot of Robert Stravinsky. By. THE VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT

ST. THOMAS — A tourist who reportedly visited for the weekend now has to seek court permission to return home after being arrested on assault charges.

According to his attorney, Robert Stravinsky was scheduled to return to his native Massachusetts on Tuesday. However, the 29-year-old physical therapist instead found himself in police custody after he was detained early that same morning.

The probable cause fact sheet states that Stravinsky was arrested after an officer was dispatched to Smith Bay in reference to a disturbance. At the scene, they met a witness who stated that at around 11:55 pm on Monday, they observed Stravinsky holding a female by the front door of the apartment building. The witness further told police that they saw Stravinsky aggressively throwing the female inside the apartment onto an unknown object. Law enforcement was called after the woman was heard screaming “get off me, you’re hurting me!”

When the responding officer knocked on the apartment door, they made contact with the apparent victim. According to the fact sheet, she stated that she and her boyfriend Robert Stravinsky were on a day sail having drinks and later traveled to Redhook to consume more alcohol. She alleged that when they arrived back at the apartment, he began choking her until she could not breathe. The woman said that this was not the first time her boyfriend had put his hands on her. However, when the officer made contact with Stravinsky, he claimed that he did not remember what happened. He was arrested and charged while the victim was advised to seek medical attention after the officer observed bruises to her neck. At the time, she declined.

On Wednesday, Stravinsky appeared for a court hearing where he was advised that he faces a possible 10-year sentence if found guilty on the charge of second-degree assault. If convicted he will also face a \$1,000 fine and will be required to complete a batterer's intervention program. Stravinsky is also charged with disturbance of the peace which carries a 90-day maximum imprisonment and a \$100 fine.

Assistant V.I. Attorney General Brenda Scales recommended that bail be set at \$1000 while noting that the victim wants the matter dismissed at this time. However, Scales affirmed that this was not something the people were considering at the moment. Attorney Alexia Furlow told the court that the defendant has no criminal record and highlighted that his parents had joined the hearing virtually in support of him. Furlow asserted that Stravinsky is not a flight risk even though he does not reside in St. Thomas. As such, she asked the court not to impose restrictions on his travel as he would need to return home.

Judge Paula Norkaitis handed down her judgment on bail after expressing concern about Stravinsky’s alleged actions. Of particular concern to Norkaitis were the bruises to the victim’s neck which the judge described as ‘highly suggestive of strangling’. She further noted that Stravinsky claimed not to know what happened, which led the court to surmise that alcohol or some other substance may have been involved.

Stravinsky's bail has been set at \$1000 with no 10 percent provision and he must notify the court of where he will reside within 24 hours of his release. He is prohibited from returning to the address where the incident occurred and is ordered not to have any unlawful contact with the victim. Judge Norkaitis stressed that this means he must not batter, abuse, harass, threaten, stalk or intimidate the woman. The defendant is also required to surrender his Massachusetts driver’s license and has been instructed to refrain from abusing alcohol while the matter remains pending.

The judge indicated that the court will entertain a motion to allow him to travel, but only after the appropriate waivers of extradition are signed. Emphasizing the seriousness of the allegations against Stravinsky, Norkaitis stressed that he is not allowed to leave St. Thomas until proper documentation has been filed with the court. In the words of the judge, this is to ensure that he will ‘not just flee the jurisdiction and forget his responsibilities and actions’.