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Suspect Facing Long Prison Sentence for Allegedly Burning Man Alive, Assaulting Him With Flat Side of a Machete

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Mugshot of Shawn Callwood By. THE VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT

ST. THOMAS — A 40-year-old man has been charged with attempted murder and a series of other grave offenses.

Shawn Callwood faces a total of 11 charges which carry maximum sentences ranging from 5 to 25 years in prison. Among the charges are attempted murder in the first degree, arson in the first degree, false imprisonment, assault in the first degree and use of a dangerous weapon during a crime of violence. All but two of the charges — unlawful entry and conspiracy to commit a crime — are labeled as aiding and abetting.

Callwood's arrest stems from a September 2021 incident where VIPD officers were dispatched to the Bordeaux area in reference to reports of a naked man walking in the roadway. The responding officers made contact with the individual who appeared to have been recently burned about his entire body. Witnesses told police that they saw the man running up the road completely naked, yelling for help and then attempting to hide behind a wall.

The man was transported to Schneider Regional Medical Center and the following day police returned to the area to search for a crime scene. They eventually found an apparent abandoned building that matched the victim's description. According to the fact sheet, police smelled fuel coming from inside the building and observed scorch marks to the wall and floor, as well as a broken window.

Officers later contacted the victim at the hospital and observed that he appeared to be in extreme pain, with significant burns about his body. In a statement to police, he said that he had recently returned to the territory and was waiting to be picked up at the airport but the person never showed up. As a result, he took a taxi to a hotel in Contant and then contacted Shawn Callwood for a ride. The man said he knew Callwood from hanging out at bars. He stated that Callwood came to pick him up driving a truck and was accompanied by other men. The victim alleges that Callwood drove him to a house where he and two other men later beat him with the flat part of a machete and some sticks. He told police that he did not fight back but tried to block the attacks. According to the victim's statements, while he was being beaten, the men asked, "what did you come back with?" and "where's the vibes?"

The man further alleges that Callwood eventually doused him in gasoline and another man threw a lit cigarette on him, causing him to become engulfed in flames. According to his statement, while on fire he observed Callwood and the men leaving the room and he proceeded to escape by jumping out of a window and fleeing to seek help. He told police that he rolled around in grass and removed his clothes in an effort to put out the flames.

According to the probable cause fact sheet, the victim was later medevaced from St. Thomas to Florida for emergency medical treatment and in January 2022 VIPD detectives traveled there to speak with him once more. As part of their investigations, officers obtained surveillance footage that showed the victim being picked up by a dark Ford pickup truck, as per his statement. An officer who was familiar with Callwood through prior contact was able to identify him as the driver.

Shawn Callwood appeared for a virtual hearing on Friday where Assistant V.I. Attorney General Brenda Scales requested that bail remain as set in the amount of \$250,000. Scales revealed that the defendant has a long rap sheet that included at least 7 prior arrests for crimes such as money laundering, assault and battery, smuggling and harboring aliens and possession of cocaine with intent to distribute. She asserted that Callwood is a flight risk based on the severity of the offenses, the evidence against him and the prison time he faces. Meanwhile, attorney Alexia Furlow asked that Callwood be allowed to post 10 percent of the bail amount and surrender his travel documents to the court.

Before handing down her conclusion on bail, judge Paula Norkaitis stressed that the court was particularly concerned and shocked by the 'outrageous' allegations against Callwood. She explained that based on the evidence against him, he is considered both a flight risk and a danger and that the community. As such, bail remained set at \$250,000 with no 10 percent provision. Norkaitis noted that Callwood is not permitted to post property as a means of securing bail. If the defendant is able to post bail he will be subjected to electronic monitoring upon his release.

