

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Shooting Suspect, A Minor When Incident Occurred, Now Being Tried as An Adult

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Mugshot of Jahfari Samuel Jr. By. THE VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT

ST. THOMAS — A teenager will now be tried as an adult after he was arrested on gun-related charges last year, while still a minor.

Jahfari Samuel Jr. has been charged with a series of offenses including possession of an unlicensed firearm, reckless endangerment, assault and possession of a firearm during the commission of a crime.

According to court documents, the minor was taken into protective custody on July 18th, 2021 after police investigated reports of shots being fired at a gas station on Alton Adams Drive. Samuel Jr. was reportedly taken into custody after police viewed surveillance footage which showed him holding an unknown object later determined to be a gun.

Samuel, who was a minor at the time, was advised of his rights in the presence of his mother. The affidavit states that he admitted to having a firearm on his person during an altercation between his friend and an unknown male. The minor told police that he had purchased the weapon weeks earlier for his protection. He identified the weapon as a 9mm handgun which he bought for \$500.

Samuel's friend who was also a minor at the time told police that he was walking out of the gas station when an unknown male grabbed him by the throat and a scuffle ensued. However, the young man stated that he managed to get away from the man and ran out of the store without looking back. He claimed that he was later picked up by Samuel and another friend near Lockhart Gardens and they drove home.

Officers reviewed surveillance footage which showed the unknown man grabbing Samuel's friend by the throat as he was attempting to exit the gas station store. While the altercation ensued, Samuel, who was on the outside, was seen grabbing what appeared to be a firearm from the right side of his waistband and looking to go back into the store. The footage also showed his friend breaking free and running off on Fifth Street while Samuel was observed running toward the Sugar Estate Laundromat on Sixth Street.

Based on the surveillance footage, the unknown male got into a vehicle and appeared to be going back to look for the minors. Samuel was later seen running back to the gas station, getting into the vehicle with another friend and driving off. After a few minutes the unknown male was seen returning to the gas station and Samuel was later seen running towards the gas station from the front of the laundromat parking lot. He was then shown pointing an object at the unknown male before fleeing the area once more. According to the fact sheet, detectives later found several spent casings in the area where Samuel was pointing the unknown object.

On February 15, the Family Court held a transfer hearing where Samuel, who is now 18, was bound over as an adult and subsequently taken into custody. At his advisement hearing on Wednesday, it was revealed that he had been on house arrest since the July incident and that he had been attending the Skills Center on evenings with court permission. While public defender Mary Ann Matney asked that bail be set at \$20,000 with an allowance for 10 percent, Judge Paula Norkaitis ordered the defendant's release on the posting of 10 percent of \$50,000.

Upon his release Samuel will be placed on 24-hour house arrest and must surrender his passport. The judge noted that Samuel cooperated with police and that this was his first exposure with the criminal justice system as an adult. However, she affirmed that the nature of the case is very serious, stressing that the accused is now an adult. His next court appearance has been scheduled for March.