

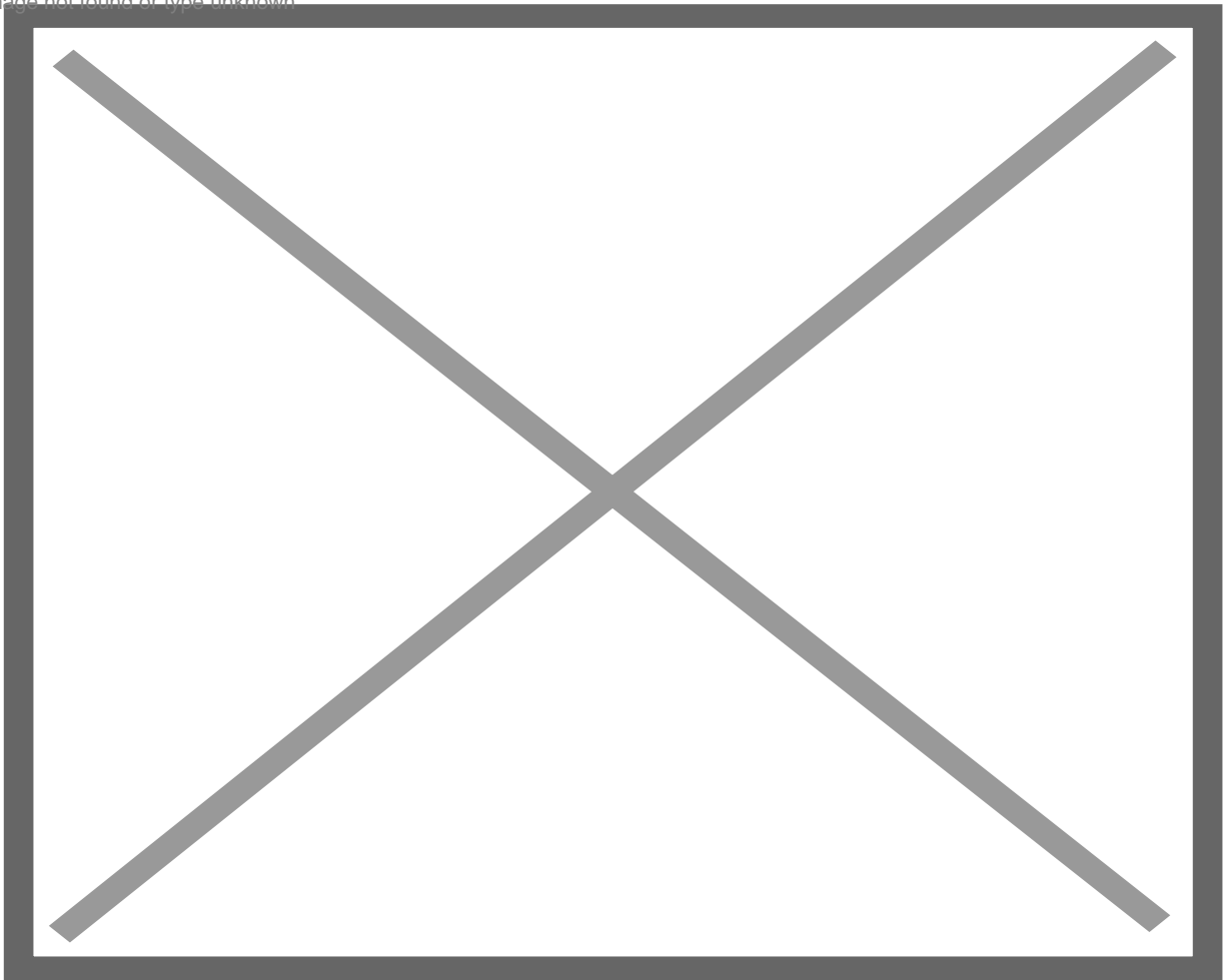
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Man Arrested After Brutally Assaulting Former Schoolmate and Friend Over Sneakers, Leaving Victim Unconscious, Police Say

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Amanie Mathurin **May 10, 2022**

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Mugshot of Eliah Cornelius. By. THE VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT

ST. THOMAS — An 18-year-old has been charged with third-degree assault after allegedly attacking his colleague over a pair of sneakers.

The charges against Eliah Cornelius stem from an assault that police say occurred in the early hours of Thursday, April 28th. According to the probable cause fact sheet, police found the male victim unresponsive in Franklin Roosevelt Memorial Park. After receiving treatment for his injuries, the alleged victim spoke to police, stating that he was attacked by Corneilus who he worked and previously attended high school with.

According to the man, a week before the attack he arranged to order a pair of sneakers for Cornelius who paid him \$275, the cost of the sneakers. He ordered the sneakers through an app and dropped them off for Cornelius on the evening of April 27th. The man told police that at an unknown time on April 28th, he was inside a restroom at Carnival Village when he was approached by Cornelius, who accused him of selling him fake sneakers. The man recounted that he replied, "I don't know what you talking about," confused as to why Cornelius thought the sneakers were fake. According to his statement, he kept moving backward to avoid Cornelius, who continued to advance on him. He claimed that Cornelius struck him to the left ear before they were separated by individuals in the restroom.

Following this encounter, the victim left the restroom and headed to the park. However, he stated that shortly after Cornelius arrived with about ten or less male friends. He alleges that Cornelius walked up to him aggressively and a physical altercation ensued, at which point Cornelius's friends jumped in, helping to beat him up. The victim told police that he tried to run to his vehicle but he was unable to evade the attackers. He further stated that he does not remember much of what occurred.

During his interview, the victim reportedly complained of pain to his head. Police also noted that he suffered bruising and swelling to his face, as well as bruises to his chest and abrasions to his head, stomach and knee. According to the probable cause fact sheet, investigations revealed that Cornelius conspired with his friends and followed the victim into the park where they carried out a premeditated assault against him.

Police officers apprehended Cornelius at his workplace on Saturday and he was transported to the Criminal Investigation Bureau where he was advised of his rights. According to police, Cornelius declined to provide a formal statement regarding the alleged incident, but he voluntarily uttered "he sell me fake shoes and he was supposed to be my friend!" He was charged with third-degree assault and disturbance of the peace. Bail was set at \$25,000 and he was turned over to the custody of the Bureau of Corrections pending his advisement hearing.

At that hearing on Monday, public defender Alexia Furlow requested that the 18-year-old's bail be lowered to \$1,000. It was a request judge Paula Norkaitis firmly denied, stating that she would "absolutely not" grant bail lower than 10 percent of the original figure of \$25,000. Cornelius will therefore be released to his mother's custody upon the posting of \$2,500.