

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Man Allegedly Driving Drunk Causes Three-Vehicle Accident; One Vehicle Overturned, Another Had Four Occupants

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Mugshot of Michael Samartin. By. THE VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT

ST. CROIX — Police have charged a man for driving under the influence following a collision involving three vehicles.

The accident which led to charges against Michael Samartin occurred on Sunday night in the vicinity of Coakley Bay Condominium.

According to the probable cause fact sheet, the responding officer made contact with the driver of vehicle 1 who was accompanied by his wife and two teenage children. Contact was also made with the driver of vehicle 2 and Michael Sanmartin, the driver of vehicle 3. All three drivers were interviewed by police separately.

Driver 1 reportedly stated that he was traveling westbound in the vicinity of Coakley Bay Condominium when he observed a vehicle traveling eastbound in the westbound lane. He recounted that he immediately veered left to avoid a collision but was sideswiped by vehicle 3 which caused him to spin out of control and collide with vehicle 2. Driver 1 further stated that once he collided with vehicle 2, he observed it spin out of control and overturn onto the passenger side before coming to a rest in the eastbound lane.

Driver 2 told police that she was traveling eastbound behind vehicle 3 when she suddenly observed that it had collided with vehicle 1 which was traveling westbound. She stated that when the vehicles collided, vehicle 1 spun out of control and hit her vehicle, causing her to lose control and overturn. She told police that she did observe vehicle 3 traveling into vehicle 1's path.

Samartin, driver 3 was also interviewed. He told police that he was traveling in the eastbound lane when he suddenly observed vehicle 1 traveling westbound, positioned at the center of the roadway. He stated that he immediately swerved to the left side of the roadway to avoid impact but still collided with vehicle 1 as it was mostly positioned in his lane. He further stated that he side-swiped vehicle 1 but did not observe what happened behind him after contact.

All three vehicles sustained damages in the collision, with vehicle 2 sustaining major damages. According to the probable cause fact sheet, police investigations found that vehicle 3 failed to remain as far left as practical, thereby causing the collision with vehicle 1, which led to vehicle 2 overturning. The officer on the scene ruled that Samartin was negligent as he operated his vehicle in a manner that endangered the occupants of vehicles 1 and 2.

While interviewing Samartin, police detected the smell of alcohol on his breath and person. When asked if he had been drinking he stated that he had only had one beer. He was subjected to three standardized field sobriety tests, all of which he failed, according to police.

He was then taken to a medical facility to receive a mandatory Covid-19 test and a medical examination which he requested. The probable cause fact sheet states that chemical testing for his blood alcohol content was not administered "due to the medical examination exceeding the two-hour period."

Samartin was subsequently placed under arrest and charged with driving under the influence of intoxicating liquor and operating a vehicle in a negligent manner. Bail was set at \$1000 and he was able to post the amount to secure his release.

At his Wednesday morning advisement hearing, the judge concluded that Samartin's release will be continued based on the previously posted sum. His attorney told the court that Samartin will be leaving the territory next month to relocate to the mainland for work. As a result, he will be expected to sign a waiver of extradition and report to the probation office telephonically. He is also expected to attend all future court appearances virtually.

