

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Feds Charge 3 V.I. Corrections Officers With Excessive Force, Obstruction Of Justice and False Statements

Crime / **Published On May 20, 2022 05:28 PM /**

Staff Consortium **May 20, 2022**



Aerial shot of the John A. Bell Adult Correctional Facility, also known as the Golden Grove Correctional Facility on St. Croix. By. ERNICE GILBERT/ V.I. CONSORTIUM

ST. CROIX — U.S. Attorney for the V.I. Delia Smith announced today that two former and one current V.I. Corrections Officers at the John A. Bell Correctional Facility on St. Croix, appeared before U.S. Magistrate Judge Ruth Miller for their initial appearance hearing after a federal grand jury returned a five-count indictment charging Maxwell Bryan, 51, Elvin Bloice, 70, and Jahmesha Bethelmie, 25, with excessive force, obstruction of justice, and false statements.

All three defendants were released on conditions imposed by Judge Miller to include a \$25,000 bond, remaining on the island of St. Croix pending trial, surrendering their passports or other international travel documents to the court and surrendering any firearms in their possession, the release stated.

According to the indictment, on September 17, 2021, Bryan used excessive force against a pre-trial detainee identified by the initials "T.H.," resulting in bodily injury. All three officers are charged with attempting to cover up the illegal conduct. The indictment charges Bryan and Bloice with one count of deprivation of rights under color of law and aiding and abetting each other in depriving T.H. of his right to be free from unreasonable force by corrections officers, the U.S. Attorney's Office. Further, Bloice is charged with making materially false statements to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and all three officers are charged with one count of falsification of records in a federal investigation.

The maximum penalty for deprivation of rights is 10 years in prison. The maximum penalty for falsification of records is 20 years in prison, and the maximum penalty for making materially false statements is 5 years in prison.

This case is being investigated by the FBI. It is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Evan Rikhye who is assisted by the Criminal Section of the U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division.

U.S. Attorney Smith reminds the public that an indictment is merely a formal charging document and is not evidence of guilt. Every defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.