

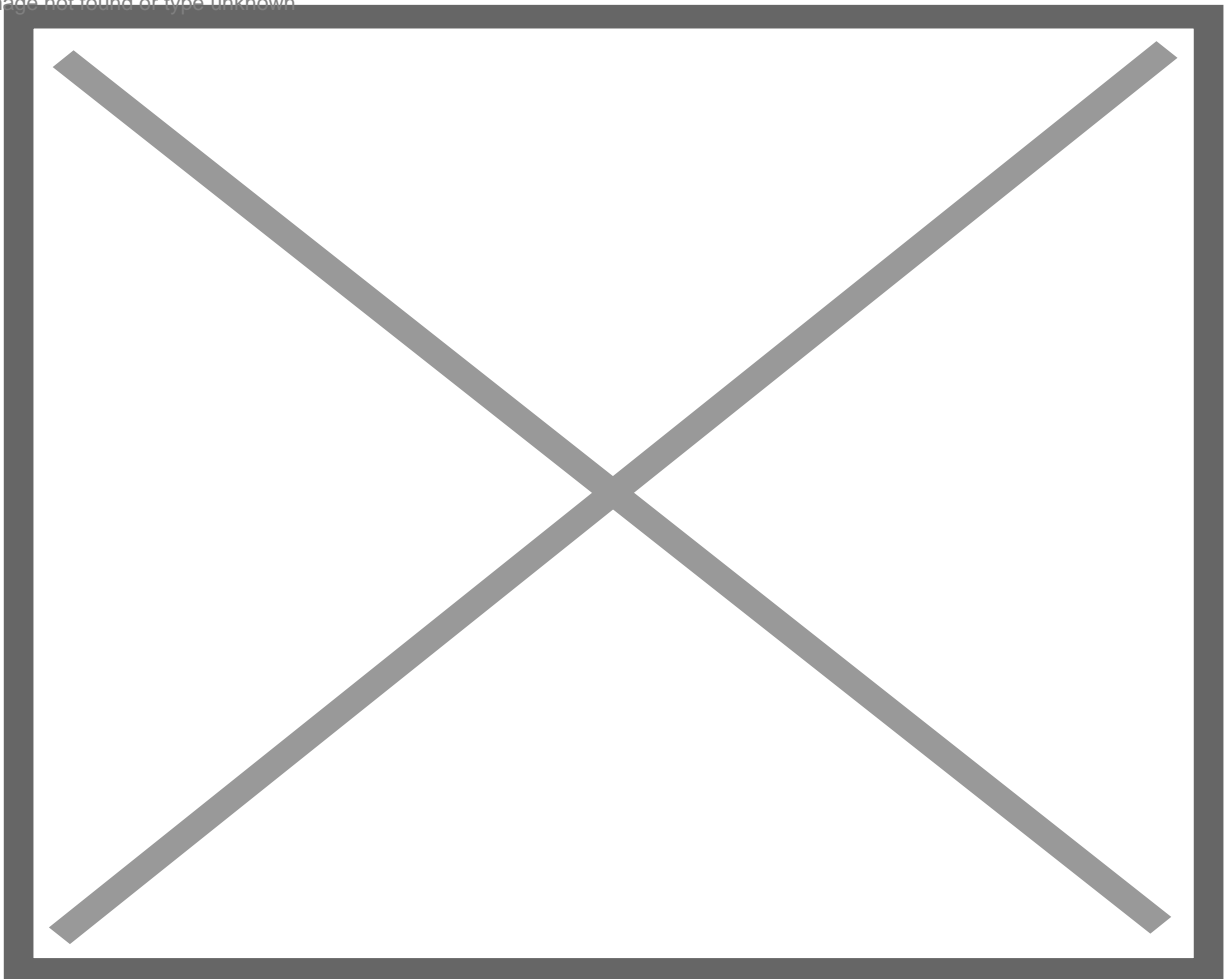
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Man Allegedly Pushes Grandmother Out of Her Car, Leaves With It. He Was Later Arrested on Firearm and Unauthorized Use of Vehicle Charges Along With Alleged Accomplice

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V.I.P.D. forensic vehicle at Half Penny Beach (pronounced Hay Penny). This photo is unrelated to the story it is attached to, and serves as a placeholder until the V.I.P.D. provides the mugshots of the two suspects. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

ST. CROIX — Two young men have been charged after police discovered an illegal firearm in a vehicle which they reportedly used without permission.

Nah-Jari Victor and Merlic Jaderon Jr. were arrested on Monday night after an individual called the police to report the unauthorized use of a vehicle. At about 10:13 p.m., the complainant told police that she believed her 19-year-old grandson Nah- Jari Victor may have been traveling to Half Penny Beach (pronounced Hay Penny) after taking the vehicle. She stated that she and Victor had previously traveled to Plaza Extra East and while returning home he asked to be dropped off at Half Penny Beach. She refused to drive Victor to the location given the time of night. However, once they arrived home, Victor allegedly grabbed the woman's hand while she was turning off the ignition and forcibly pushed her out of the vehicle. Victor then went from the passenger's seat to the driver's seat and drove away.

Police subsequently checked Half Penny Beach and discovered the vehicle parked along the shoreline with two occupants inside. Officers ordered the occupants to exit the vehicle but the driver, who was later identified as Victor placed the vehicle in reverse and slowly attempted to maneuver it into a position to leave. Police ordered him to stop the vehicle multiple times at which point the passenger later identified as Merlic Jaderon Jr. was heard saying, "dawg just stop, I know this man." Nevertheless, Victor continued attempting to reverse, causing the officer to exit his vehicle with his service weapon at the low-ready position.

The officer again ordered Victor to stop and exit the vehicle and this time the suspect cooperated, placing the vehicle in park and turning it off. Both occupants then exited with their hands raised and officers conducted a pat down.

According to the probable cause fact sheet, while standing next to the vehicle police detected the smell of what they believed to be marijuana. The two men were asked if there were in possession of any weapons or contraband in the vehicle, to which Jaderon replied, "just a little bit of weed in my bag." Jaderon then gave the officers permission to search the bag and they discovered a green leafy substance that was later determined to be marijuana.

While police conducted the search, they observed that Victor was exhibiting what they described as jittery mannerisms. He attempted to gain access to the vehicle stating, "it's cold, I just want to get my jacket." He was denied access while officers continued their search. That search reportedly revealed the barrel of a pistol protruding from between the front center armrest and the passenger side front seat. The fact sheet states that the firearm contained 8 live rounds in the magazine and an empty chamber. Officers noted that the weapon was located within close reach of both occupants and easily accessible to them both. When asked if he had a permit for the firearm, Victor denied ownership. Police later contacted Victor's grandmother and she stated that there had been no weapon in the vehicle ever since she rented it approximately one week earlier. She also confirmed that she did not own a weapon nor a license to carry one.

Police then contacted the Supervisor of the Firearms Bureau who confirmed that neither Victor nor Jaderon had a valid license to possess any firearms. The two were arrested and both charged with unauthorized possession of a firearm in a vehicle and unauthorized possession of ammunition. Bail was set at \$50,000 each and they were both remanded after being unable to post the amount. Victor was additionally charged with unauthorized use of a vehicle as a separate matter.

They both appeared before a judge on Wednesday and the judge concluded that Jaderon would be allowed to post \$1,000 in cash and sign an unsecured bond for the remainder of the \$50,000 bail. Meanwhile, Victor will be permitted release upon the posting of \$5,000 cash and an unsecured bond for the remaining \$45,000. Prior to his release, Victor must provide a suitable third-party custodian who has been vetted and approved by the court. Both Victor and Jaderon will be placed

on 24-hour house arrest following their release and they have been prohibited from having any contact with each other.

With regards to the matter involving the unauthorized use of the vehicle, Victor's bail was set at \$5000 and the judge explained that he will be permitted to sign an unsecured bond for the remainder. While this matter is pending he is prohibited from entering his elderly grandmother's residence and must maintain a 1,000 feet distance from her at all times.

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