

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Four Sentenced to Federal Prison in Gem and Gold Corner Jewelry Store Armed Robbery; Each Ordered to Pay \$510K Restitution

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Staff Consortium **January 16, 2023**



ST. THOMAS — United States Attorney Delia L. Smith announced today that Tashawn T.A. Warner, 25, Shemar Webster, 23, and Jamari Benjamin, 25, all of St. Thomas, were sentenced by United States Chief District Judge Juan R. Sánchez to terms of imprisonment ranging from 135 to 36 months for their roles in the Hobb's Act armed robbery of Gem and Gold Corner Jewelry Store in St. Thomas.

Warner, the leader and organizer of the group, was sentenced to 135 months incarceration, while Webster was sentenced to 125 months incarceration and Benjamin

was sentenced to 36 months incarceration.

All three defendants were also sentenced to three years of supervised release and ordered to pay restitution in the amount of \$510,000.00 to Dorchester Insurance D/B/A Topa Insurance Services, Inc., and Gem and Gold Corner Jewelry Store.

According to court documents, on September 19, 2020, Warner, Webster and Benjamin robbed Gems and Gold Corner Jewelry Store located on the waterfront near Veteran's Drive in St. Thomas. The group arrived at Gem and Gold Corner Jewelry Store at approximately 9:31 a.m., in a white Suzuki Vitara. Warner and Webster entered the jewelry store, both armed with an AK 47 rifle and a Glock 22 handgun and wearing face coverings, while Benjamin, the getaway driver, remained in the vehicle. Once inside the store, Webster and Warner pointed their firearms at five employees, two of whom were unarmed security officers, and ordered them to lie on floor with their hands up. Warner and Webster then used their firearms to smash glass cases and removed jewelry with a gross estimated value of approximately \$1.1 million. Both men stuffed a large quantity of jewelry in a duffel bag, and when the bag was full, they stuffed more jewelry in their pants pockets.

During the armed robbery, Webster physically assaulted the owner of Gem and Gold Corner with his firearm causing injury to his head. The three men later fled the scene and traveled to the Mafolie Hill area where Webster escaped in a second vehicle while Warner and Benjamin fled the area in the white Vitara. Virgin Islands Police Officers pursued Warner and Benjamin as they traveled to the Bovoni Housing Community and abandoned the Vitara and fled on foot. Forensic Officers collected masks, gloves and jewelry from the abandoned vehicle, and DNA collected from those items linked Warner and Webster to the armed robbery. Benjamin later turned himself in to law enforcement, while Webster fled to Atlanta, GA, and Warner went into hiding. In November 2020, Webster was extradited back to St. Thomas, and Warner was arrested in December 2020.

During the execution of Warner's arrest warrant, Shemelle Isaac, 31, was also arrested after federal agents observed Isaac driving a black Infiniti sedan at a high rate of speed toward Warner's residence. Isaac stopped his vehicle next to Warner's parked vehicle and opened the trunk of his Infiniti while still seated in the driver's seat. Agents then observed Warner remove a duffel bag from his vehicle that matched the description of the bag used in the Gem and Gold Corner Jewelry Store armed robbery and place it in the trunk of Isaac's vehicle.

Isaac was charged as an accessory after the fact after federal agents found four firearms, including the Glock 22 used in the robbery, a large quantity of jewelry and \$5,540.00 cash inside the duffel bag. Isaac admitted to the agents that he was aware that Warner was wanted by law enforcement in connection with Gem and Gold Corner's armed robbery. For his role, Isaac was sentenced four days incarceration, and three years of supervised release.

"The effects of gun violence are felt far and wide in our small community. This vicious and senseless act left a permanent and traumatic impact on the victims of the robbery. The tremendous work of the Virgin Islands Police Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigations, however, delivered the ultimate reward to the victims and the people of

our Territory – justice, lengthy terms of imprisonment and full restitution”, United States Attorney Delia L. Smith stated.

The Customs and Border Protection, Homeland Security Investigations and the Drug Enforcement Agency investigated, and Assistant United States Attorney Daniel H. Huston prosecuted this case.

This effort is part of an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) operation. OCDETF identifies, disrupts, and dismantles the highest-level criminal organizations that threaten the United States using a prosecutor-led, intelligence-driven, multi-agency approach. Additional information about the OCDETF Program can be found at <https://www.justice.gov/OCDETF>.

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