

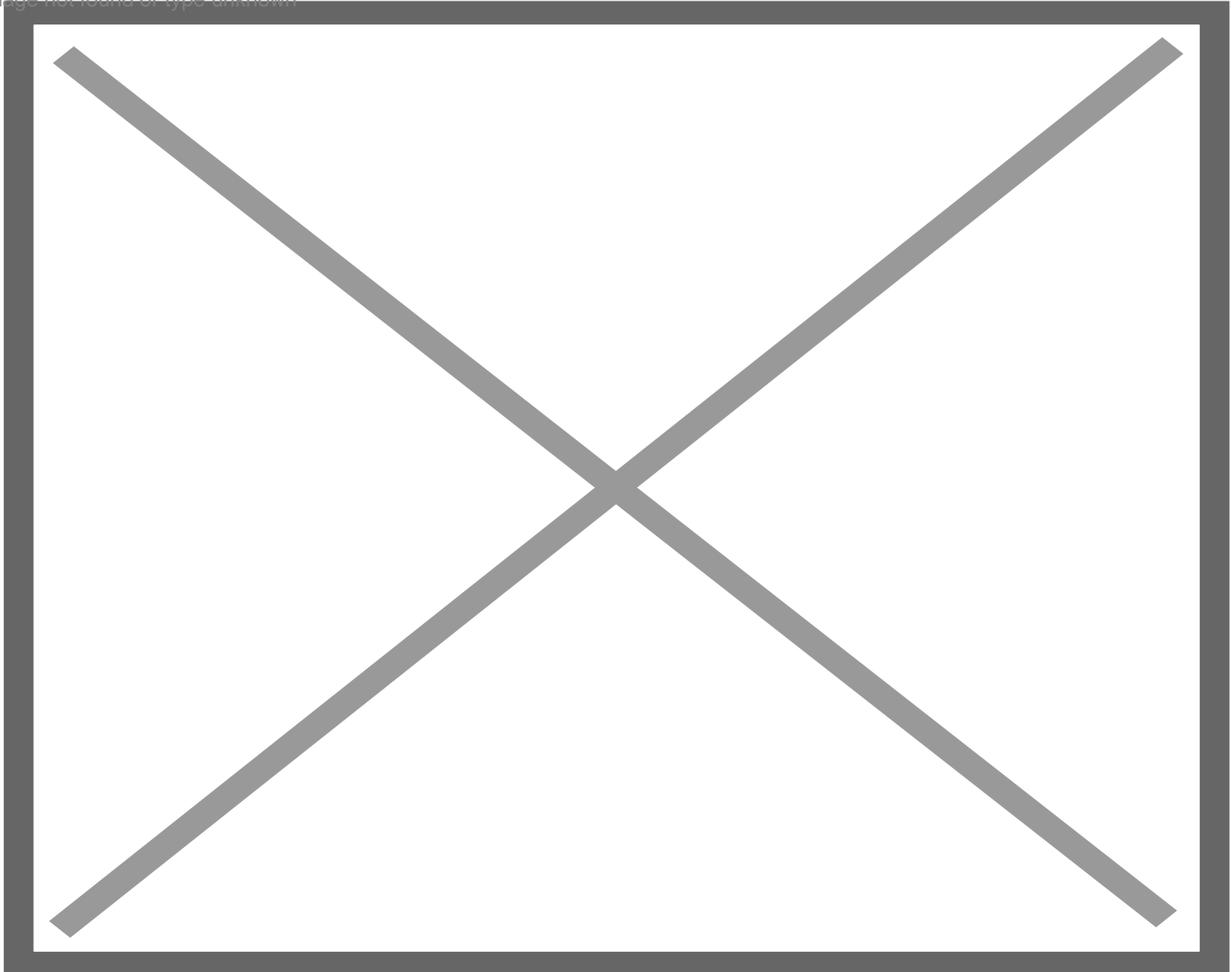
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Colorado Man in Court After Girlfriend Accuses Him of Assaulting Her in Hotel Room

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Mugshot of John Michael Purcell. By. THE VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT.

ST. THOMAS — A Colorado man accused of assaulting his girlfriend while the couple was vacationing on St. Thomas appeared in court on Monday.

Police responded to an assault report at the Elysians Hotel and met a woman with a laceration on her nose bridge and a reddened neck. She told them that she and her boyfriend, 34-year-old John Michael Purcell, arrived on St. Thomas on January 18th. The next day, they were purchasing groceries in the Red Hook area when the couple reportedly had a disagreement. The woman said she left the store and went to the dock to clear her head. She returned to the store after about half an hour to find that her boyfriend had only purchased alcohol and cigars. The woman said she

picked up some food items and a bottle of passion fruit rum, intending to celebrate her upcoming birthday.

When the pair returned to their room, the woman said Purcell attacked her, kicking and punching her about the body. She told police she fled to the pool area and climbed the gate so her alleged attacker could not reach her, and dialed 911 for help. Responding officers are alleged to have merely informed the couple of the territory's domestic violence laws before leaving.

On January 20th, the woman alleged that she tried to keep some distance between herself and her boyfriend but Purcell followed her first out to the beach and then to a boat out on the water. He reportedly pushed her off the first boat but did not pursue when she swam to another boat with three men on board. By the time the woman returned to the hotel, she says she found Purcell had consumed all the liquor, but that night he kept to himself.

On the morning of the 21st, the woman says she told Purcell that he had to leave the hotel room, either willingly or as a result of a security escort. That's when Purcell allegedly attacked again, first knocking a beverage out of the woman's hand and then grabbing her by the neck in a chokehold, obstructing her breathing.

The woman recounted being slammed onto the bed, held in another chokehold and then slammed onto the floor, where she sustained a cut on her nose bridge and began to bleed. When she was able to leave the hotel room the woman said she went to the police a second time, showing them the bruises on her thighs and the laceration to her nose. She told them that Purcell had assaulted her multiple times since they began dating last August, mostly while drunk.

Purcell, for his part, denied assaulting his girlfriend. He said he suspected she had ordered him out of the hotel room because she planned on breaking up with him and leaving him behind on St. Thomas. She had insisted on the trip, Purcell said, despite his lack of funds, because she wanted to celebrate her birthday. Purcell suggested that his girlfriend received the bruises on her body from clambering into the boat, and explained the scratches on his right arm as likely from him walking through the trees. His dislocated pinky finger was due to an attack months prior, Purcell said. Investigations turned up a letter the woman wrote Purcell, terminating their relationship.

Purcell was arrested and charged with second-degree assault as an act of domestic violence and simple assault and battery.

In court on Monday, a judge ruled that Purcell be allowed to post \$150 cash and sign an unsecured bond for the remainder of the \$1,000 bail to secure his release. Once posted, he would be allowed to leave St. Thomas and return to Colorado, but he must report to the Office of Probation twice a week. He is to have no contact, directly or indirectly with the victim. He is also prohibited from possessing a firearm, ammunition or dangerous weapon.

His next scheduled court appearance is on February 10, 2023.