

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Discovery of High-Capacity Magazine at Traffic Stop Leads to Overnight Police Stakeout, Arrest of Two Men

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From left to right, mugshots of Lamar Richardson and Javorn Vanterpool. By. THE VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT

ST. THOMAS — Two men were arrested and charged with reckless endangerment after what began as a routine traffic stop turned into a high-stakes game of hide and seek with police.

Officers conducting traffic stops about 11:25 p.m. on Friday came across a heavily tinted white Toyota Corolla near the area of Wimmelskafts Gade and Dronings Gade, with no tags on the front and temporary tag that lacked information to the rear.

One of the officers approached the vehicle and recognized the driver as Lamar Richardson. While Richardson was looking for his paperwork, the officer said he saw, on the floor of the rear passenger seat, a black miniature backpack wrapped tightly around an object that looked suspiciously like a 50-round drum magazine for a firearm.

Police asked Mr. Richardson if he had a license for a firearm in the territory, and he answered in the negative. The officer told Richardson what he had seen, and explained that was what had prompted the question. Mr. Richardson then reportedly verbally assented to a request to search the bag, and handed it over.

The officer says once he had taken hold of the bag, his suspicions were confirmed. With his thumb, he said he could feel a bullet at the top of the drum. Richardson responded evasively to the first command to get out the vehicle, and when the officer asked again, he reportedly pushed the ignition button, put the vehicle into gear, and sped off the wrong way down a one-way street, into oncoming traffic. The other two officers on the traffic stop reportedly had to jump to safety in the face of the fleeing vehicle.

The bag was opened and its contents visually determined to be a 50-round drum magazine filled with 9 mm bullets.

Around midnight, the car was spotted in the parking lot of Magen's Junction apartments, and the VIPD Intel Unit was mobilized to provide overnight surveillance.

Lamar Richardson surfaced at around midday on Saturday, when he exited a white Ford Focus that had come into the parking lot. He got into his Corolla and sped away, with the Focus following behind. VIPD units "had a hard time keeping up with the vehicles," according to documents presented in court, as they wove through traffic "at a very high rate of speed." Soon, police lost sight of the cars, and subsequently fanned out to search St. Thomas in a "grid-style" manner.

One officer was assigned to the airport as Richardson was judged a serious flight risk because of his previous convictions. After an initial sweep, the officer came across the Ford Focus, which made "an abrupt U-turn" and sped off the way it had come. The officer followed in his police unit, tracked it to a food truck beside the beach, and called for backup.

The two occupants of the vehicle were arrested and brought to the Richard Callwood Command police station. While they were being questioned, a call came in to inform police that Richardson was on his way to the station to turn himself in, which he did around 1:00 p.m.

Two people were ultimately charged on Saturday. On Monday, a judge found probable cause to charge Lamar Richardson with possession of ammunition, interfering with an officer discharging his duties, and reckless endangerment. Javorn Vanterpool, Mr. Richardson's acquaintance in the Focus, is charged with first-degree reckless endangerment, and interfering with an officer discharging his duties.

They will next appear in court on March 24.