

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Alleged Long-Time Abuser Arrested For Assaulting Child With Meat Tenderizer

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Mugshot of Akil Thomas. By. THE VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT.

ST. CROIX — A man accused of beating a child in his care with a meat tenderizer is now before the courts on charges of child abuse.

The minor reported the incident to police on Saturday, June 17, when he told officers that the day prior, he got into trouble at his summer program because of his behavior. His guardian, Akil Thomas, was called in and informed of the situation. Thomas reportedly responded by hitting the child twice on the chest, with eyewitnesses present.

As a consequence of his behavior, the minor was asked to leave the camp for the rest of the day. When he and Thomas got home, the child told police that he went to attend to his house chores. While going about his duties, the minor said that Thomas approached him, armed with the meat tenderizer, and began striking him all over his body, including his head.

The boy said he tried to grab the kitchen tool to stop the assault, but Thomas picked up a piece of board and reportedly continued the assault with both improvised weapons. The boy told police that ever since their parents died about four years ago, he and his siblings have been in the care of Thomas, who subjects them to physical and emotional abuse.

Cameras in the home may have captured the incident, police were informed. They took note of the fresh bruises on both of the boy's hands, his arm, left thigh and chest area, as well as swelling on both forearms. Discolorations, abrasions and puncture wounds were deemed consistent with the hard edges of a meat tenderizer. Police also observed a contusion on the right side of the boy's forehead.

When contacted by police, Thomas admitted to hitting the boy twice when he first arrived at the camp, but denied any further physical contact, or any interaction whatsoever, after the pair arrived at the house. A witness, however, told police that Thomas reported beating the child that day, and additionally said that they had seen Thomas "using the harshest forms of punishment" on the siblings on several occasions. The witness told police that the boy in question confided that Thomas had beat him with the meat tenderizer and the wooden 2x4 for about four hours. The witness also said the minor had shown them his bruised and swollen body, and told police that this sort of abuse was not uncommon.

The day after the alleged assault, the boy contacted the witness complaining of pain, and asked for help in getting to the police station. The minor reportedly outlined a plan to sneak out of the home and meet a family member in a secret location to avoid arousing the suspicion of Thomas. A second witness corroborated key details of the story and disclosed that they too had once been abused by Thomas.

Akil Thomas was subsequently arrested and charged with child abuse and third-degree assault as a crime of domestic violence.

Following his advice of rights hearing on Monday, Thomas was assessed bail at \$15,000, but was allowed to post 10 percent of that amount, plus one dollar, with the rest held as an unsecured bond. His arraignment hearing has been scheduled for July 5, 2023.