

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Eyes Everywhere: St. Thomas Man Charged With 15 Felonies After Months of Excessive Harassment

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Mugshot of Marvin Rivera Jr. By. THE VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT.

ST. THOMAS — A man who reportedly stalked and harassed his ex-girlfriend for six months now faces several felony domestic violence charges in court.

On the evening of March 22, a woman came to the Alexander Farrelly Justice Complex to report several suspicious incidents that had happened to her over the last few months.

According to court documents, it all began in January, when she was out with friends one night. When walking back to her car, she told officers that she noticed the hood was

slightly ajar. She closed it, but upon reflection she says that she did not remember having it open at any point during that day.

She told police that she had recently ended a relationship with Marvin Rivera Jr. after at least 6 years. During their time together, officers learned that he would often text or call her when she was out, seeking her exact location.

The woman told police that when she and Mr. Rivera broke up, she demanded the return of the keys she had given him, keys to her home and her vehicle. However, she suspected that her ex made copies of the keys before he returned them, and had been using them since the breakup to access her residence and vehicles and deploy tracking mechanisms. She told police that she suspected that a tracker had been placed in her vehicle some time in February, after she told Mr. Rivera that the relationship was over. After hearing the news, she said that he escalated a verbal confrontation into physical assault, hitting her several times about the body and placing his hands around her throat.

Police searched her vehicle that day at the station, after she told them that Mr. Rivera had sent several threatening text and voice messages throughout the day, and found a small black box attached under the hood on the driver's side. The box, with its flashing lights and wires extending outwards, was not a factory part, police concluded.

The woman was back at the police station in June. She said that after officers found the suspicious device the previous month, she was afraid to return home alone, knowing how her ex would react after discovering that the tracking device had been removed. She told officers that she packed a bag and went to stay at a friend's place for a few days. That very evening, she received a barrage of text and voice messages from Mr. Rivera, telling her that he knew she was not at home.

Then, she told police she received a chilling series of photos - a broken picture frame, which when she left her apartment had contained a photo of the former couple, and a burnt item in her bathroom sink. Further messages gave a detailed description of her bedroom as she had left it that evening. Those messages were terrifying, the woman told police, because at that point she had already received his copy of her keys, thus he could not have had access to the details he recounted unless he had found another means of entering her apartment.

Shaken, she contacted Mr. Rivera's mother and sister the next day, and told them what was going on. They said they too were concerned about their son and brother's behavior, informing her that Rivera had made them listen to a recording he said was taken with a phone he had placed in the woman's bedroom. Mr. Rivera reportedly told his family that the audio contained evidence of the woman's cheating, but his mother and sister said they didn't hear anything on the recording.

The woman realized that the phone the other two women had described was an extra iPhone that had gone missing. When she asked her ex about it, he had become defensive and started an argument.

The three women – ex-girlfriend, mother and sister – agreed that an intervention was necessary to address Mr. Rivera's current behavior. During this process, he reportedly

agreed to seek counseling, and the woman said she felt there was a chance for reconciliation if he could do that. A few months passed and things seemed to be going well, until she and Mr. Rivera had a verbal confrontation on June 8, while at his place.

After the argument, she packed her things and left, albeit without several of her personal items (scrubs, a Louis Vuitton handbag, and a jumpstart kit for a vehicle, among others) which were in his locked vehicle and which he refused to return to her. When she got to her place, she began to unpack, and noticed a strange white object near her dressing table. It turned out to be a video camera that had been taped in place between items in her bedroom. She traced the wires to find where the camera was plugged in, unplugged it and called the police, who told her to bring the camera in (since she had already moved it from its original location) and turn it in as evidence in the domestic violence investigation that was already underway. She did so.

On July 24, the woman came back to police to provide a video statement. She had received a call from a family member who alerted her to an explicit video of her Mr. Rivera had posted to his Facebook Stories. He had blocked his ex- from his page, but the family member sent her a screenshot of the video along with several comments from Rivera and others. The woman said she recognized the screenshot as belonging to a video her ex had previously sent to her coworker, a family member, and a friend several months ago.

After seeing the screenshot, the woman told police that she then received several WhatsApp messages from her ex-boyfriend, informing her that this was only the beginning. She says he threatened to post the video on WhatsApp as well. Subsequently, he sent her a screenshot of a conversation between him and another woman in which he was advised to take the video down. He did so, but later posted photos of his ex on Facebook, tagging her in the posts.

Police reportedly found another tracking device when they searched her vehicle again on July 25.

After having been advised several times by police to request a temporary restraining order against Mr. Rivera, the woman did so on July 26. The order was issued on July 31, and Mr. Rivera's mother and sister confirmed that he had been served. After receiving the court order, the woman said Mr. Rivera continued his barrage of text messages, sending them directly to her phone after she stopped reading them on WhatsApp.

Police found Mr. Rivera at the Magistrate's court on August 3rd, the scheduled court date to hear the matter concerning the temporary restraining order. He was taken into custody and charged with simple assault, second-degree assault, cyberstalking and harassment, third-degree burglary, stalking, aggravated stalking, unlawful entry, telephone harassment, contempt of court, destruction of property, and disturbance of the peace — all as crimes of domestic violence. He was also charged with vehicle tampering, grand larceny, second-degree burglary, and printing, exhibiting, distributing, or possessing obscenity.

Mr. Rivera was remanded into the custody of the Bureau of Corrections, and appeared on August 4 before Magistrate Paula Norkaitis for his advice of rights hearing.

In court on Friday, probable cause was found to uphold all the charges against Marvin Rivera. Bail was set at \$50,000, but he was granted the option to pay 10 percent in cash to secure his release ahead of trial, which was done . Mr. Rivera has been admonished to stay at least 200 feet away from his ex-girlfriend, her vehicle, her residence, and her place of work at all times. He must remain in the care of a suitable third-party custodian and must abide by a 9pm to 6 a.m. daily curfew. Once a week, he must contact the probation office by telephone, and he is not to have any form of contact – whether by phone, email, a third party, or on social media – with his ex.

His next court appearance has been scheduled for August 18.