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Mother-Daughter Duo Accused of Unauthorized Expenditures at WAPA, Rich Royal, Ralph Lauren and Other Outlets

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Sylvia Benjamin. By. THE VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT.

ST. CROIX — Sylvia Benjamin, 43, surrendered to authorities on Wednesday after an arrest warrant was issued in connection to charges of fraud, grand larceny, and unauthorized access to a computer.

Benjamin is accused of defrauding a Banco Popular Visa debit card holder by making unauthorized transactions amounting to \$2,420.29.

The Economic Crimes Unit began investigating Sylvia Benjamin on April 13, 2023, following a complaint of "obtaining money by false pretense." According to investigators, Benjamin had accessed the complainant's Banco Popular Visa debit card information without permission and, along with her daughter Leah Benjamin, made several unauthorized transactions. These transactions spanned a variety of outlets including Walgreens STT, VIYA, Amazon, Rich Royal, Ralph Lauren Corporation, PayPal, and the V.I Water and Power Authority. Surveillance footage showed Leah Benjamin retrieving some of the fraudulently purchased merchandise.

During the investigation, evidence was found that packages related to the fraudulent activities were delivered to Leah Benjamin's St. Thomas address. Utility bills at both Sylvia and Leah Benjamin's residences in St. Thomas and St. Croix were also paid using the stolen card information, according to the V.I. Police Department.

Sylvia Benjamin turned herself in at the Wilbur H. Francis Command Police Station, where she was advised of her Miranda rights and placed under arrest without incident. She was subsequently booked and charged with obtaining money by false pretense, grand larceny, and access to computers for fraudulent purposes.

Unable to post the set bail of \$20,000, Sylvia Benjamin was remanded to the John A. Bell Adult Correction Facility. She is scheduled for an advice of rights hearing today at the Superior Court of the Virgin Islands.

As for Leah Benjamin, attempts to contact her have been unsuccessful. Authorities have issued an All-Points Bulletin to the media seeking assistance in locating her as she remains at large.

Anyone with information regarding this case is urged to contact the Economic Crimes Unit or the Criminal Investigation Bureau at (340) 774-2211. Alternatively, tips can be submitted to Crime Stoppers V.I. at 1(800)222-TIPS(8477).