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Details Emerge in Case Alleging VIPD Community Service Officer and Second Suspect Robbed 16-Year-Old Near Rainbow Beach

Court documents provide more details in the Rainbow Beach robbery case, alleging a 16-year-old was robbed by VIPD Community Service Officer T'Ssadiq Joseph and a co-defendant, as police tracked a phone to a vehicle and found Joseph hiding in bushes.

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From left to right, mugshots of T-Ssadiq Joseph and George Richards III. By. THE VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT.

A robbery near Rainbow Beach on Easter Sunday ended with two young men in custody after a 16-year-old victim identified them to police, officers tracked one suspect's phone to a vehicle

parked near the beach, and one of the accused was found hiding in nearby bushes wearing a black ski mask.

According to court documents, police were alerted to the incident Sunday night by the 911 Emergency Call Center, which reported a robbery in Estate Prosperity near the beach. According to the account, the victim had been robbed of his chain and pendant and identified the two assailants as T'Ssadiq Joseph and George Richards III.

Police knew Richards's mother, and she reportedly helped officers track her son's phone to a vehicle parked near the beach. The vehicle was empty when officers found it, but a flashlight search revealed two mobile phones inside — one on the driver's seat and the other on the left rear passenger seat.

Officers then searched the vegetation along the road where the vehicle was parked and came upon a man lying in the bushes. He was dressed in black and wearing a black ski mask over his face. Police said they identified themselves and ordered him out of the bushes. He reportedly complied at first before running toward an open field. Officers pursued, apprehended and handcuffed him. He identified himself as Joseph and told officers he was a Community Service Officer with the VI Police Department. Police said he also declared, without prompting, that he was not involved in the robbery, but knew that two people had been planning it.

After Joseph was detained, officers spoke directly with the victim, who again identified Joseph and Richards as the two people who robbed him. The teenager told police that all three attend the same school.

According to the 16-year-old, he was standing near a parked vehicle by Rainbow Beach talking to a friend when he saw Joseph and Richards approaching. Their ski masks were not yet covering their faces, he said, but as they came closer, they pulled the face coverings down. The teen told police he began walking backward because he regarded them as "bad boys" who believe they can act with impunity. He said he did not realize one of them had moved behind him. He then felt himself being grabbed from behind while Richards pulled the chain from around his neck. Both men then reportedly ran off on foot into nearby bushes. The victim told police the stolen chain and pendant were worth about \$5,000 altogether.

After the robbery, the teenager said he called a family member, who then contacted police.

The vehicle to which Richards's phone was tracked was registered to Joseph's father, who told police he had given his son permission to use the SUV that night. A search of the vehicle turned up the two phones officers had already seen, along with a colorful backpack containing a BB gun.

Police later questioned both suspects, and each gave a statement. Joseph said he was seated in the vehicle on Prosperity Road when Richards and an unnamed third person approached and asked whether he wanted to rob someone. He told police he laughingly answered "yes," thinking the comment was a joke, before declining. A short time later, Joseph said he saw two people dressed in black run past the vehicle but could not identify them because of the darkness. He also said he later heard people calling both his name and Richards's name. When Richards's mother arrived and began calling for them, Joseph said he chose to hide in the bushes and did not answer because he did not feel obligated to do so. He also said he did not initially know the person who found him in the bush was a police officer, which is why he began struggling when discovered. Joseph reportedly explained the ski mask by saying he was trying to avoid sun exposure. He also claimed Richards had at one point been inside the vehicle and had a colorful backpack with him.

Richards, for his part, told police he had been dropped off in the Prosperity area by his sister. He said he met Joseph and spoke with him briefly, then handed Joseph his phone for safekeeping, as he normally does when he does not want to be disturbed while talking to a girl. Richards said he and the girl were later picked up by another friend near the “I Heart St. Croix” sign in Frederiksted, where he was told police were in Prosperity and that he was being named as a suspect. He admitted carrying the multicolored backpack, which he said contained the BB gun and three rash guards, but told police he had given the bag to a man with blonde dreadlocks and only later learned that it had ended up in Joseph’s vehicle. He denied knowing anything about a robbery.

The girl Richards said he had been with also spoke to police. She told officers they were together near Rainbow Beach, but that she left him at the beach.

With the suspects giving what the account described as contradictory narratives, both were ultimately arrested and charged with second-degree robbery, grand larceny, and conspiracy. Unable to meet the initial \$50,000 bail requirement, Joseph and Richards were remanded into custody to await their advice of rights hearings.