

Swansea Man involved in Armed Robbery spree sentenced to prison

A 43-year-old Swansea man who went on a one-man armed robbery spree in Fall River and Somerset last April was sentenced to serve three to five years in state prison, Bristol County District Attorney Thomas M. Quinn III announced.

Jeffrey Vizthum pleaded guilty last week in Fall River Superior Court to indictments charging him with two counts of armed robbery, one count of armed and masked robbery, and one count of leaving the scene of property damage.

April 14, 2020, at approximately 9:55pm, Fall River Police were dispatched to Seasons Corner Market located at 130 William S. Canning Blvd for an armed robbery. Upon arrival, police spoke with a female cashier, who was visibly shaken. The victim stated she had just been robbed at knifepoint by a man, about 5'10, wearing a blue and red cloth surgical mask and an Army green sweatshirt.

The victim was at the register when the suspect placed two Monster energy drinks on the counter and asked for a pack of Marlboro Reds. When the victim placed the cigarettes on the counter, the suspect leaned over toward the right side of the partition with a knife and demanded all of the money in the register. The victim gave the suspect all the money from the register, which was \$100. The suspect told the victim not to say anything and then walked out of the store with the cash, energy drinks and cigarettes.

On surveillance video, the police observed a white older model utility truck slowly pass Seasons Corner Market. The truck pulled over near the Penske Truck Rental, which is next door to the market/gas station. After a few minutes, a male, the

suspect, appeared from the direction where the truck was last seen and walked toward the gas station. After the robbery, the suspect ran in the same direction where the truck was last seen. Police noticed the suspect had a very distinct gait. Both of the suspect's feet pointed inward as he walked.

On April 16, 2020, at approximately 12:48am, Somerset Police were dispatched to Cumberland Farms at 992 GAR Highway for an armed robbery. Upon arrival, police spoke with a male clerk, who stated a white man with a graying goatee, late 30s to early 40s, approx. 5'10 to 6' tall, average to thin build, had entered the store wearing a dark blue hooded sweatshirt, khakis and dark shoes.

The suspect attempted to purchase two cans of Monster energy drink and a pack of Marlboro Red cigarettes but did not have enough money. The suspect then threatened the victim with a box cutter, stating "give me all the money in the drawer, it's not worth it." The suspect reached around the temporary glass partition with his right arm and pointed the knife at the victim. The victim gave the suspect \$137 in cash from the register. The suspect then fled with the cash, energy drinks and cigarettes. On surveillance video, the police observed the suspect appeared to walk pigeon toed (toes point inbound). Police located a Monster energy drink can on Lepes Road where the suspect was seen running toward.

Police located video surveillance footage from two houses on Lepes Road which depicted a large white pickup truck with a utility body on Lepes Road during the timeframe of the robbery. The vehicle was parked in the area where the can of Monster energy drink was located.

Somerset and Fall River police officials spoke about their investigations and believed the same suspect committed both robberies. Believing the suspect was in the construction field based on the white utility truck, police queried recent activity at local pawnshops and learned the defendant had

pawned a tool on April 15, 2020. Police conducted a Facebook search and saw the defendant had posted several photos of a white utility truck that he recently purchased.

The police also observed photos on Facebook in which the defendant was wearing a green hooded sweatshirt similar to the one worn by the suspect in the Seasons Corner Market robbery. A video showed the defendant walking with the same distinct gait with both feet pointing inward.

Later that day on April 16, 2020, at approximately 12:18pm, Fall River Police were dispatched to Stop and Save at 345 Robeson Street for a robbery. Upon arrival, police spoke with a male clerk. The victim reported a white male wearing a blue hooded sweatshirt and khaki pants entered the store and proceeded to the coolers. The suspect grabbed two cans of Venom energy drinks. The suspect brought the energy drinks to the register and paid for the items. The suspect then reached over the counter with his left hand while brandishing a knife in his right hand.

The suspect stated "open the drawer, it's not worth your life" while lunging over the counter with the knife. The victim allowed the suspect to retrieve approximately \$400 from the register. The suspect then yelled "don't call anybody" and exited the store with the energy drinks and the money. Police believed the suspect was the same individual who had robbed Seasons Corner Market and Cumberland Farms.

Somerset Police then received a call from a man who reported that he saw the Somerset Police Department's Facebook post about the robbery. The caller believed the defendant was the suspect based on the description and that the defendant has been on a mission for drugs. The caller reported that the defendant came by yesterday in a white utility truck that he just purchased to get money. The caller also stated every time they go to a store, the defendant gets two energy drinks. The caller further stated that the defendant "walks with his toes

kinda pointed in" and carries a box cutter or a knife.

Somerset Police presented a photo array to the victim from Cumberland Farms. The victim identified the defendant's photo and said "that one looks most like the guy." Fall River Police presented a photo array to the victim from Stop and Save. The victim identified the defendant's photo, stating "I am pretty sure he is the one. I am 100% he is the one. Out of all the pictures you showed me he is the one."

At approximately 9:51pm that evening, Fall River Police were dispatched to 45 Campbell Street for a motor vehicle accident involving a white Chevy pickup truck that fled the scene. The male victim reported that after hitting his fence the vehicle struck the house next door, sideswiping the siding. The truck then hit a 2009 blue Honda Civic that was parked on Campbell Street. While canvassing the area, police observed a white Chevy pickup truck with a utility body parked at the intersection of Barlow and Horton Street. Police observed damage to the driver's side of the vehicle including a flat rear tire, a broken driver's side window and left side damage to the utility body.

Police located the defendant sitting in the driver's seat. The defendant stated "I'm sorry about that. I lost my brakes. I should have stopped." The defendant admitted to colliding into a fence and a house when he tried to stop the vehicle and turned the wheel. Police impounded the vehicle pending a search warrant. On April 17, 2020, police executed a search warrant for the white utility truck. During the search, police located a green hooded sweatshirt, carpenter/khaki pants, black boots, two Venom energy drink cans, a Monster energy drink can cut in half, a utility knife, two folding knives and empty packs of Marlboro Red cigarettes.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Carolyn Morrisette and the state prison sentence was imposed by Judge Renee Dupuis. In addition to the state prison sentence, the

defendant will also be placed on an additional five years of probation upon his release from incarceration.

“The defendant went on a spree of armed robberies and terrorized store clerks who were just trying to make a living. He is a danger to the community and belongs off the street,” District Attorney Quinn said.

UMass Dartmouth among national group hosting Women's History Month closing keynote

Activist Sonya Renee Taylor speech part of a co-sponsored event by the Center for Women, Gender & Sexuality.

As part of its celebration of Women's History Month, the UMass Dartmouth Center for Women, Gender & Sexuality has partnered with six other collegiate women's centers to host a Women's Herstory Month Closing Keynote by Sonya Renee Taylor on March 30 at 7 p.m. The event is free and open to the public, but attendees must register via Zoom.

Sonya Renee Taylor will deliver a keynote titled *The Body is Not an Apology: Radical Self-Love as Transformative Action*, based on her role as the Founder and Radical Executive Officer of *The Body is Not An Apology*, a digital media and education company with content reaching half a million people each month.

Taylor is an award-winning performance poet, activist, and

transformational leader who has mesmerized audiences across the U.S., New Zealand, Australia, Germany, England, Scotland, Sweden, Canada, and the Netherlands as well as in prisons, mental health treatment facilities, homeless shelters, universities, festivals, and public schools across the globe. Taylor was named one of Planned Parenthood's 99 Dream Keepers in 2015, a Planned Parenthood Generation Action's 2015 Outstanding Partner awardee, and one of the 12 Women Who Paved the Way for Body Positivity by Bustle Magazine.

The event is co-sponsored with women's centers at the University of Connecticut, Georgia College, the University of Iowa, the University of Virginia, the University of New Mexico, and Virginia Tech.

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_nZNhnXEFR7Ko5c0BmLU0A

New Bedford Fire Department responds to structure fire, trapped residents, "domesticated animal mass casualty incident"

"Today at 9:39 multiple 911 calls were received reporting a structure fire at 303 County Street. Upon arrival, crews observed a heavy fire condition on the first floor of this wood frame two-family dwelling.

Three occupants of the residence were trapped on the second

and third floors of the dwelling. Crews from Engine Co. 6 and Ladder Co. 3 positioned two ground ladders in the rear of the building to rescue the occupants. The male occupant who was trapped in a third-floor bedroom jumped onto the ladder as soon as it was placed below the window. FF Paul Medeiros from Ladder 3 can be seen holding on to the victim to prevent him from falling. He was able to hold onto the victim until another firefighter was able to assist the victim down the ladder.

Two female occupants were carried down ground ladders from the second-floor apartment. The male occupant was transported to Rhode Island Hospital and the two female occupants were transported to St. Luke's Hospital by NBEMS Paramedics. All three are currently stable.

The fire was under control in less than hour. Command called for a special alarm which included ISU-1 (air supply) and Engine 8. The first alarm apparatus included Engines 1, 6, 7, Ladders 1 and 3, along with Command Units 1 and 2. The cause of the fire is being investigated by the NBFD Fire Investigation Unit and the State Fire Marshals Office. Investigators are determining if the residence was protected by working smoke detectors.

During interior operations, firefighters located and removed sixty cats from the residence. Twenty-six of them were treated and resuscitated by NBEMS Paramedics, Animal Control Officers, NBPD Officers, and available NBFD personnel. The members of these agencies worked seamlessly to provide these animals care in what rapidly evolved into a domesticated animal mass casualty incident.

Animal Control Officers transported cats to veterinary emergency clinics in West Bridgewater, Swansea, and as far away as West Greenwich, Rhode Island. All of them will require hyperbaric treatment and oxygen overnight. Thirty-four cats died in the fire. NBEMS and NBFD were equipped with Coalition

for Animals rescue masks however the supply was exhausted today.

Manny Maciel, Head of Animal Control stated this was largest amount of pets treated and transported from a structure fire and extends his thanks to all personnel on scene who assisted with care of these animals.

The Providence Canteen provided support and rehab services to a large contingent of first responders and we appreciate and thank you for your efforts.

The Department is proud of District Chief Michael Dandurand along with the members of Engine Co. 6 and Ladder Co. 3 for their skill and quick actions in rescuing the three victims."

All photos by Manny Fernandes and NBEMS.



Lakeville Police Department mourns passing of retired K9 “Fredo”

“We regret to announce the passing of Retired Lakeville Police K-9 Fredo on March 19th, 2021.

Fredo, a Czechoslovakian shepherd, was an asset to the department and community from 2007 until 2009.”-Lakeville Police Department.



Lakeville Police Department photo.

**Joint operation between the
local police departments and**

Massachusetts State Police leads to seizure of 20 off-highway vehicles

The Springfield Police Department in conjunction with the Massachusetts State Police conducted an operation during the week of March 7th to deter illegal dirt bike activity in the city of Springfield. In addition to quality of life concerns, recent calls for service involving illegal dirt bike riders have included victims having their vehicles maliciously damaged, being assaulted and in one incident being shot at.

The enforcement efforts under the direction of Springfield Police Captain David Martin, Springfield Police Lieutenant Brian Beliveau, Massachusetts State Police Major Mike Habel and Massachusetts State Police Lieutenant Jon Provost resulted in the seizure of 20 off-highway vehicles and 17 arrests. Three of the dirt bikes recovered were previously reported stolen.



Massachusetts State Police photo.

Officers and Troopers utilized a variety of strategies including the use of the Massachusetts State Police Air Wing to assist in locating and apprehending illegal dirt bike and ATV riders. It is illegal to operate an off-highway vehicle anywhere in the city of Springfield.

“Great team effort between our officers and the State Police. We noticed it was going to be a warm week and proactively wanted to get ahead of this issue to put a dent in some of this illegal dirt bike activity. This is not a one and done operation. We’ll be out there again,” said Springfield Police Commissioner Cheryl Clapprood.

“We are grateful for the opportunity to work with our partners in the Springfield Police Department to crack down on this illegal activity, which endangers those who live, work, and raise families in Springfield and negatively impacts their quality of life,” said Colonel Christopher Mason, Superintendent of the Massachusetts State Police. “We look forward to continuing to help address this problem.”

Mayor Domenic J. Sarno stated, “Great work by SPD and the Massachusetts State Police. I commend Commissioner Clapprood, Captain Martin, Lieutenant Beliveau, Massachusetts State Police Major Habel, Massachusetts State Police Lieutenant Provost, and all of our brave and dedicated men and women in blue on their continued joint efforts to eradicate these illegal dirt bikes and ATV marauders on our city streets and neighborhoods.



Massachusetts State Police photo.

We will continue to cite, arrest, and confiscate these illegal vehicles. I again, ask parents of these young riders to intervene with their child, for their own health and safety, and help educate them on the appropriate places to ride and enjoy these vehicles. Our public streets are no place to ride these vehicles. It is illegal and you can get seriously injured or worse. We will continue enforcement in the name of public health, public safety, and for the quality of life for our residents and business community.”

Springfield Police Officers and Massachusetts State Troopers arrested 16 individuals in Springfield and one in Holyoke over the course of several days. Of those arrested, three were juveniles. The individuals arrested received various citations and the charges listed below for the adults.

20-year-old **Edrick Santiago** of Springfield is charged with:

- Unlicensed Operation of a Motor Vehicle
- Negligent/Reckless Operation of a Snow/Recreational Vehicle
- Possession with the Intent to Distribute a Class D Drug
- Default Warrant

22-year-old **Jeylon Sims** of Springfield is charged with:

- Unregistered Motor Vehicle
- Uninsured Motor Vehicle
- Operating a Motor Vehicle in Violation of a License/Class



Massachusetts State Police photo.

21-year-old **Orlando Olmeda** of Springfield is charged with:

- Reckless Operation of a Motor Vehicle
- Unlicensed Operation of a Motor Vehicle
- Resisting Arrest
- Uninsured Motor Vehicle
- Failure to Produce Snow/Recreational Vehicle Registration

23-year-old **Edwin Rivera-Cruz** of Springfield is charged with:

- Operating a Motor Vehicle with a Suspended License
- Number Plate Violation to Conceal ID
- Resisting Arrest
- Possession of a Class A Drug
- Possession of a Class B Drug

25-year-old **Mario Roldan** of Springfield is charged with:

- Unregistered Motor Vehicle
- Failure to Stop/Yield
- Failure to Stop for Police

21-year-old **Charlie Flores** of Springfield is charged with:

- Unlicensed Operation of a Motor Vehicle
- Negligent/Reckless Operation of a Snow/Recreational Vehicle

33-year-old **Raddy Nunez** of Springfield is charged with:

- Reckless Operation of a Motor Vehicle
- Unregistered Motor Vehicle

21-year-old **Christain Mejias-Diaz** of Springfield is charged with:

- Reckless Operation of a Motor Vehicle
- Possession with the Intent to Distribute a Class A Drug
- Unregistered Motor Vehicle
- Failure to Stop/Yield – Two Counts
- Uninsured Motor Vehicle
- Receiving a Stolen Motor Vehicle

37-year-old **Jose Reyes** of Holyoke is charged with:

- Snow/Recreational Vehicle Public Way Violation

33-year-old **Rafael Perez** of Holyoke is charged with:

- Negligent Operation of a Motor Vehicle
- Failure to Stop/Yield – Three Counts

35-year-old **Luis Marrero** of Springfield is charged with:

- Failure to Produce Snow/Recreational Vehicle Registration
- Negligent/Reckless Operation of a Motor Vehicle

28-year-old **Luis Sanchez** of Holyoke is charged with:

- Failure to Stop for Police

23-year-old **Shakira Molinary** of Springfield is charged with:

- Arrest Warrant

32-year-old **Anthony Cortest** of Springfield is charged with:

- Negligent/Reckless Operation of a Snow/Recreational Vehicle
- Failure to Stop for Police
- Resisting Arrest
- Default Warrant

***Attached are photos of several of the off-highway vehicles

seized during this operation. The Massachusetts State Police Airwing participated in the operation. Edited footage captured by the Airwing:

Repeat New Bedford drunk driver who fled scene of crash sentenced to jail time

A 69-year-old New Bedford man was convicted earlier this month of his fifth OUI will serve the next two-and-a-half years in the Bristol County House of Corrections, District Attorney Thomas M. Quinn III announced.

Domingo Fernandes pleaded guilty on March 1st in Fall River Superior Court to indictments charging him with Operating Under the Influence of Liquor-Fifth Offense, Negligent Operation of a Motor Vehicle and Leaving the Scene of Property Damage.

On December 29, 2018 around 5:45pm, the defendant was driving a grey BMW in New Bedford with no license plate. When police attempted to stop the car, the defendant sped off at a high rate of speed, and crossed double yellow lines to pass another car. While going 40 mph in a residential neighborhood, the defendant turned onto another street without breaking and almost lost control of the car and narrowly avoided striking numerous parked cars.

While speeding through the residential neighborhood, the defendant's vehicle almost struck a pedestrian who had to jump out of the way to avoid being hit. The defendant continued to

drive at a high rate of speed, drove through a stop sign, and was going so fast that his car went airborne at one point. The defendant then struck a parked car, and continued to drive before crashing into a telephone pole. He then fled his car on foot, and after a short foot pursuit, he was apprehended.

The New Bedford Police officer concluded the defendant was under the influence of alcohol based on the strong odor of alcohol on his breath and his inability to answer questions in a coherent manner. He was transported to Saint Luke's Hospital for minor injuries to his face and head, and had a .17 blood alcohol level.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Matthew Sylvia, who argued for a more severe five year state prison term. The defendant, however, requested a two year county jail sentence.

Judge Raffi Yessayan eventually sentenced the defendant to serve two-and-a-half year in the county jail.

"The defendant is a menace on the roadways because he repeatedly drives while drunk. The facts of the case clearly demonstrate this. Fortunately nobody was hurt despite his reckless actions," District Attorney Quinn said.

Locals catches Boston Police officer "red-handed" in small act of kindness

"BPD Photo of the Day: Small Act of Kindness Caught on Camera in Roxbury!"

The Boston Police Department wishes to extend our thanks and gratitude to the passerby who shared a video of one of our officers as he stopped to assist an elderly female with her bags while working a paid detail on Elm Hill Avenue in Roxbury.

The photograph above was taken from the video which was recently posted on social media along with the statement: 'It's the small, kind gestures that go a long way.'

We couldn't agree more."

UMass Dartmouth to host FREE video game design event

Collaboration with MassDiGI offers computer science and animation design skills to students.

During the weekend of March 20, UMass Dartmouth students and the Massachusetts Digital Games Institute (MassDiGI) are offering the Jump Start Game Jam to interested college and high school students. The event begins on Saturday, March 20 at 1 p.m. and continues into Sunday, March 21. The virtual event is free, but preregistration is requested by March 19.

The Jump Start Game Jam lets participants try their hand at creating a video game – from coding on up.

"The Jump Start Game Jam has been created with first-time participants in mind," said UMass Dartmouth student Luke Klegraeffe. "We know that a lot of high school students who have a passion for games are searching for cool, fun things to do and we thought a game jam might hit the spot."

Attendees will receive an introductory online game jam information “kit.” The “kit” will include game jam basics, recommendations for free software, and game assets for the weekend. Attendees can also listen to lectures from game industry professionals.

“Creating a game is an amazing experience,” said Robby Williams, a MassDiGI Collab student from Becker College. “It opens up a whole new world. Every game jam I’ve taken part in has always produced some great work.”

The games created during the jam will be posted online on Itch.io for all to play after the event.

Register for the Jump Start Game Jam today!

Freetown Police Department charges 55-year old Taunton man with rape of a child with force

On February 8, 2021, Gilbert Hernandez, age 55, of Taunton, MA, was located and arrested by the Massachusetts State Police Violent Fugitive Apprehension Section on outstanding arrest warrants from the Freetown and Lakeville Police Departments.

After a lengthy investigation conducted by Freetown Police Detective Shane Kelley and Patrolman Kaylin Jose, police had sought a warrant charging Hernandez with rape of a child with force, aggravated statutory rape of a child (2 counts), and indecent assault and battery on a person aged 14 or over.

Hernandez was identified as the suspect in a sexual assault investigation involving a female juvenile.

The Lakeville police department had, based upon the same investigation, obtained an arrest warrant for Hernandez charging him with indecent assault and battery on a person aged 14 or over (2 counts).

Additionally, there are pending charges from three southeastern MA communities involving the same victim.

Hernandez, a former mail carrier, substitute school teacher, and Sunday school teacher, within the Freetown and Lakeville areas was booked at the Freetown Police Department before being transported to the Fall River Justice Center for arraignment.



Freetown Police Department photo.

New Bedford has roadwork sites for the upcoming week of March 8, 2021 – March 12, 2021

The City of New Bedford has roadwork sites for the upcoming week of March 8, 2021 – March 12, 2021 and they are as follows:

Eversource:

Eversource will be working on the gas main relays at:

- Pleasant St. working from Bedford St. to Madison St.
- Oaklawn St. working from 37 Oaklawn St. towards 350 West Rodney French Blvd.
- Chestnut St. working from Willis St. to Pope St.
- Phillips Ave. working at 217 Phillips Ave to the intersection of Ashley Blvd. Then work east on Phillips Ave. towards N. Front St.
- County St. working from Cove Rd. to Scott St. Including Cove Rd. from County St. to Margin St.

Other:

- The contractor (SCR Construction) will continue site work at the future South Coast Rail station platform locations in the City. Work will commence at each of the platform sites: Church St. at Carlisle St. and the existing rail yard located between Wamsutta St., Herman Melville Blvd. and Whales Tooth parking lot.
- The contractor (Bell Traffic) will be working on the traffic signals located at the intersection of Acushnet Ave. X Ashley

Blvd. Police details and traffic controls will be in place for any temporary lane shifts.

- Department of Public Infrastructure will be filling potholes city-wide on a continuous basis.
- The contractor (Baystate WinSupply) is scheduled to continue large water meter replacements at various locations throughout the city. There are no anticipated traffic controls for this work.
- Due to ongoing construction at the High Hill Reservoir residents may experience discolored water. The water is safe, and the discoloration will be temporary. We recommend allowing the water to settle for a few hours and then flushing your service line by letting the bathtub run for a few minutes until the water clears.

**** Please note: Contractors will continue to follow guidelines and protocol regarding COVID-19 social distancing while conducting work in construction zone.**

Due to the current COVID-19 situation the Department of Public Infrastructure will be closed to the public entry. Office staff is available to assist by email and telephone.