Beat: News

Serial rapist escapes from U.S. prison, rapes ex-girlfriend before capture

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USPA News - A suspect described as a serial rapist escaped from a prison in the U.S. Virgin Islands on Sunday evening and raped his ex-girlfriend before being arrested again after an island-wide manhunt, local authorities said on Monday. Rafael Joseph, 39, was incarcerated at the Golden Grove Correctional Facility on St. Croix, the largest island of the U.S. territory, and was awaiting trial for the rape of two women in February 2011.

He escaped from the facility sometime after 9 p.m. local time on Sunday, according to the Bureau of Corrections. After the late-night escape, the man traveled to the town of Frederiksted on the west end of St. Croix, where he allegedly raped his former girlfriend at about 2 a.m. local time on Monday. The victim is the same woman who also reported being raped by Joseph at a residence just outside of Frederiksted on February 12, 2011, according to police. St. Croix Police Chief James Parris said his officers responded swiftly when they were advised of the jailbreak, which led the Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency (VITEMA) to issue an emergency alert to residents. Authorities warned women on the island to take extra precautions and urged motorists to be cautious of hitchhikers. "We had off duty officers reporting in to support the officers who were working. Officers responded to every sighting from the Harbor View Apartments to Sunny Isles to the Frederiksted town and surrounding areas," Parris said. "They were determined to get this suspect off the streets and they did." Joseph was spotted by residents near Frederiksted on Monday morning, after which officers saw him entering a bushy area near a housing community just before noon local time, police spokeswoman Melody Rames said. She said an officer followed Joseph into the bush and called for him to stop and surrender, which he did. Joseph was charged with Escape from Custody and First Degree Rape after Monday`s arrest, Rames added. It was not immediately known how Joseph was able to escape from the Golden Grove Correctional Facility, but an investigation into the circumstances surrounding the jailbreak was continuing.

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