



**POLICE DEPARTMENT
CITY OF BURLINGTON**

MEDIA RELEASE

INCIDENT TYPE:	DATE/TIME REPORTED:	
Possession of Stolen Property [T13VSA2561] Violations of Conditions of Release X 2 [T13VSA7559] Driving With Criminally Suspended License[T23VSA674] Operating Without Consent [T23VSA1094]	09/05/2020 20:25 Hours	
INCIDENT NUMBER:	LOCATION:	
20BU017072	Roadway in the area of 12 Pearl Street Burlington, VT	
INVESTIGATOR:	INVESTIGATOR CONTACT:	
Officer J. Gonzales	658-2704	
AUTHOR:	APPROVED BY:	
Lieutenant J. Lawson	DC Murad	
SUSPECT:	AGE:	SUSPECT ADDRESS:
Abdifatah Sheikh-Bile	27	Winooski, VT
SUSPECT DISPOSITION:		
Arrested; released on criminal citation and conditions of release from Hon. Shafritz to appear in court on 9/8/20		

NARRATIVE:

On evening of September 5, 2020 at approximately 2025 hrs the Burlington Police Department Emergency Communications Center received an emergency call reporting that a person's vehicle had been stolen from the area of 12 Pearl Street in Burlington, VT. The victim, a resident of Georgia, Vermont, was working as an Uber driver in Burlington at the time of the theft.

At approximately 2205 hrs, a vehicle matching the stolen car's description was seen stopping at the intersection of North Avenue and Sherman Street, near the entrance to the administrative offices of the Burlington Police Department. Police were able to discern the registration and confirmed that it was the vehicle reported stolen. The stolen vehicle was facing northbound in the southbound lanes, causing other vehicles to move into the opposite lane to avoid it. The operator of the stolen vehicle engaged in what appeared to be a conversation with protesters in Battery Park.

A supervisor responded as the vehicle pulled into the portion of Sherman Street that serves as a parking area for Battery Park and police headquarters and attempted to turn around. When the supervisor activated his emergency lights and stopped the vehicle, the operator exited and sat on the hood of the car. The supervisor approached him and was quickly surrounded by

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approximately a dozen protestors loudly objecting to the stop. A passenger in the stolen vehicle was able to abscond owing to the supervisor having to contend with not only the subject of the arrest and passenger but also with multiple observers noisily pressing too close. These observers' actions came very close to constituting "Impeding public officers," which is a criminal offense that can be punished by a prison sentence of as long as three years. It must be noted that some persons affiliated with the protest attempted to prevent their associates from interfering with the lawful arrest. The arrival of additional officers and the swift removal of the arrestee prevented further escalation.

"This arrest was made much more complicated and fraught because people very nearly stepped over a line from lawfully observing to criminally impeding officers performing their duty," said Acting Chief of Police Jon Murad. "That kind of hindrance does not make anyone more safe—not observers, not officers, not the suspect. Some people associated with the protest did in fact make efforts to deescalate other protestors and prevent them from obstructing officers; I commend them, and hope that's a sign of common ground on which we and the protest organizers can build. The Burlington Police Department has done all we can to foster First Amendment expression and avoid escalation because of that hope. But this belief that officers doing their work in the field can be interrupted or blocked—which we've now seen during two arrests and one emergency response—is unacceptable and unlawful."

(On Wednesday, August 26, after a man was arrested for a road-rage incident at the intersection of Battery and College Streets, protestors briefly surrounded marked a cruiser before marching on One North Avenue. On Monday, August 31, protestors locked arms across Pearl Street at the intersection of Pearl and Pine Streets and prevented marked cruisers with lights illuminated from responding to an emergency call about a fight that reportedly involved a firearm. Last night's arrest incident is described above.)

Abdifatah Sheikh-Bile, 27, of Winooski, was identified as the operator of the stolen vehicle. Mr. Sheikh-Bile was processed and, at the direction of Judge Shafritz, was released on Conditions of Release. He is to appear in court for the following charges:

- Possession of Stolen Property [T13VSA2561]
- 2 Counts of Violations of Conditions of Release [T13VSA7559]
- Driving With Criminally Suspended License [T23VSA674]
- Operating Without Consent [T23VSA1094]

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Mr. Sheikh-Bile has an extensive history with police agencies. He was most recently arrested on September 2, 2020, by Winooski police. Charges related to that arrest include Unlawful Restraint, Aggravated Operation without Consent, and Driving with a Criminally Suspended License. On April 4, 2020, he was apprehended by BPD after a crash of a separate stolen vehicle on Riverside Drive, during which he was allegedly traveling at an extremely high rate of speed and driving under the influence of drugs.

Mr. Sheikh-Bile's criminal history indicates the following:

- 1 Failure to Appear,
- 17 Violation of Court Orders or Conditions Charges with 1 Convictions,
- 11 Felony charges with 2 Convictions,
- 65 Misdemeanor Charges with 18 Convictions,
- 16 Assaultive Crime Charges with 3 Convictions,
- 1 Assault on and Officer Charge,
- 1 Escape Charge, and
- 8 Violation of Probation/Parole Charges.

Anyone with additional information about this incident is asked to contact the Burlington Police Department at (802) 658-2704.

13 V.S.A. § 3001. Impeding public officers.

(a) A person who hinders an executive, judicial, law enforcement, civil, or military officer acting under the authority of this State or any subdivision thereof, or who removes a weapon from the person of a law enforcement officer, or who deprives a law enforcement officer of the use of a weapon, shall be imprisoned not more than three years or fined not more than \$500.00, or both. For purposes of this section, law enforcement officer is defined under section 3019 of this title.

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