

**COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS  
IN THE SUPREME COURT  
CRIMINAL LAW DIVISION  
2023/CRI/bail/00054**

**BETWEEN**

**JAMAL TAYLOR**

**Applicant**

**AND**

**DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC PROSECUTIONS**

**Respondent**

**Before:** The Hon. Justice Neil Brathwaite

**Appearances:** Mr. Stanley Rolle for the Applicant  
Mr. Basil Cumberbatch, Ms. Kara Butler-Wight for the Respondent

**Hearing Date:** 9<sup>th</sup> October A.D. 2024

**Ruling Date:** 30<sup>th</sup> October A.D. 2024

**RULING ON BAIL**

- [1.] The Applicant seek bail on charges of Attempted Armed Robbery, Possession of an Unlicensed Firearm, and Possession of Ammunition in respect of which he was charged in the Magistrate's Court on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2023. The Applicant is twenty-seven years old, and worked in construction prior to his remand. He states that he has no other pending matters, but admits having been previously convicted of Possession of an Unlicensed Firearm, Possession of Ammunition, Armed Robbery, Robbery, and Stealing. He suggests that he is not a flight risk. He maintains his innocence, and seek to be released on bail pending his trial.
- [2.] In seeking to oppose the application, the Respondent relied on the affidavit of Vashti Bridgewater filed 25<sup>th</sup> October 2023. The statements exhibited to that affidavit reveal that within minutes of receiving a report of an attempted armed robbery at Superwash, Carmichael Road, police officers responded and pursued a vehicle fitting the description of the vehicle in which the suspects had left the scene. At the conclusion of that chase, officers arrested the Applicant, who allegedly ran from that vehicle. The vehicle was

searched, and a loaded firearm was recovered. The Applicant was interviewed, and admitted that it was the vehicle that was shown in surveillance footage from the establishment, and stated that he was merely giving two other men who were in the vehicle a ride.

[3.] On behalf of the Applicant, it is submitted that his pre-trial detention was prejudicial, as it resulted in a loss of livelihood. Counsel relied on the constitutional presumption of innocence, and further submitted that the test for the court in considering this application is whether the Applicant is likely to appear for his trial. Furthermore, counsel noted that the Applicant's trial is not scheduled to commence until 30<sup>th</sup> March 2026, by which time the Applicant would have been in custody for just over three years, which it was suggested is unreasonable. It was further noted that there is no suggestion that the Applicant has breached bail conditions in the past. Counsel therefore suggested that conditions could be put in place to ensure the Applicant's attendance at trial, and urged the court to release the Applicant on bail.

[4.] On behalf of the Respondent, it was noted that a previous bail application was refused in November 2023, on the basis that the court was satisfied that there was a need to protect public order. Reliance was placed on the nature and seriousness of the offence, as well as the cogency of the evidence and the antecedents of the Applicant to support an inference, that there is a need to protect public order in this case. With respect to the question of detention for an unreasonable length of time, counsel notes that the Bail Act, while defining a reasonable time as three years, states that this definition is without limiting the extent of a reasonable time. It was therefore suggested that a three year period is not a limiting factor, and counsel further noted that the trial date is just two weeks outside of that three year period. It was therefore suggested that the continued detention of the Applicant pending his trial would not be unreasonable, and that there has been no change in circumstances since the refusal of bail by Hilton J.

## **LAW AND ANALYSIS**

[5.] The tensions surrounding an application for bail have been considered in many cases. In **Richard Hepburn and The Attorney General SCCr. App. No 276 of 2014**, Justice of Appeal Allen opined that:

“5. Bail is increasingly becoming the most vexing, controversial and complex issue confronting free societies in every part of the world. It highlights the tension between two important but competing interests: the need of the society to be protected from persons alleged to have

committed crime; and the fundamental constitutional canons, which secure freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention and serve as the bulwark against punishment before conviction.”

6. Indeed, the recognition of the tension between these competing interests is reflected in the following passage from the Privy Council’s decision in *Hurnam The State* [2006] LRC 370. At page 374 of the judgment Lord Bingham said *inter alia*:

“...the courts are routinely called upon to consider whether an unconvicted suspect or defendant shall be released on bail, subject to conditions, pending his trial. Such decisions very often raise questions of importance both to the individual suspect or defendant and to the community as whole. The interests of the individual is, of course, to remain at liberty unless or until he is convicted of crime sufficiently serious to deprive him of his liberty”. Any loss of liberty before that time, particularly if he is acquitted or never tried, will prejudice him and, in many cases, his livelihood and his family. But the community has countervailing interests, in seeking to ensure that the course of justice is not thwarted by the flight of the suspect or defendant or perverted by his interference with witnesses or evidence and that he does not take advantage of the inevitable delay before trial to commit further offences...”

[6.] At paragraph 11 she further noted that

“The general right to bail clearly requires judges on such an application, to conduct realistic assessment of the right of the accused to remain at liberty and the public’s interests as indicated by the grounds prescribed in Part A for denying bail. Ineluctably, in some circumstances, the presumption of innocence and the right of an accused to remain at liberty, must give way to accommodate that interest.”

[7.] The presumption of innocence is enshrined in Article 20(2)(a) of the Constitution of The Bahamas which states:

*“Every person who is charged with a criminal offence – (a) shall be Presumed to be innocent until he is proved or has pleaded guilty”.*

[8.] Furthermore, Article 19(1) provides as follows:

**“19. (1) No person shall be deprived of his personal liberty save as may be authorised by law in any of the following cases-**  
**(a) in execution of the sentence or order of a court, whether established for The Bahamas or some other country, in respect of a criminal offence of which he has been convicted or in consequence of his unfitness to plead to a criminal charge or in execution of the order of a court on the grounds of his contempt of that court or of another court or tribunal;**  
**(b) in execution of the order of a court made in order to secure the fulfilment of any obligation imposed upon him by law;**



(c) for the purpose of bringing him before a court in execution of the order of a court;

(d) upon reasonable suspicion of his having committed, or of being about to commit, a criminal offence;

(e) in the case of a person who has not attained the age of eighteen years, for the purpose of his education or welfare;

(f) for the purpose of preventing the spread of an infectious or contagious disease or in the case of a person who is, or is reasonably suspected to be, of unsound mind, addicted to drugs or alcohol, or a vagrant, for the purpose of his care or treatment or the protection of the community;

(g) for the purpose of preventing the unlawful entry of that person into The Bahamas or for the purpose of effecting the expulsion, extradition or other lawful removal from The Bahamas of that person or the taking of proceedings relating thereto; and, without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing, a law may, for the purposes of this subparagraph, provide that a person who is not a citizen of The Bahamas may be deprived of his liberty to such extent as may be necessary in the execution of a lawful order requiring that person to remain within a specified area within The Bahamas or prohibiting him from being within such an area.

(2)...

(3) Any person who is arrested or detained in such a case as is mentioned in subparagraph (1)(c) or (d) of this Article and who is not released shall be brought without undue delay before a court; and if any person arrested or detained in such a case as is mentioned in the said subparagraph (1)(d) is not tried within a reasonable time he shall (without prejudice to any further proceedings that may be brought against him) be released either unconditionally or upon reasonable conditions, including in particular such conditions as are reasonably necessary to ensure that he appears at a later date for trial or for proceedings preliminary to trial”.

[9.] The relevant provisions of the Bail Act Chapter 103 read as follows:

“4. (2) Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act or any other law, any person charged with an offence mentioned in Part C of the First Schedule, shall not be granted bail unless the Supreme Court or the Court of Appeal is satisfied that the person charged

(a) has not been tried within a reasonable time;

(b)...

(c) should be granted bail having regard to all the relevant factors including those specified in Part A of the First Schedule and subsection (2B), and where the court makes an order

for the release, on bail, of that person it shall include in the record a written statement giving the reasons for the order of the release on bail.

**(2A) For the purposes of subsection (2) (a) ...**

**(a) without limiting the extent of a reasonable time, a period of three years from the date of the arrest or detention of the person charged shall be deemed to be a reasonable time;**

**(b) delay which is occasioned by the act or conduct of the accused is to be excluded from any calculation of what is considered to be a reasonable time.**

**(2B) For the purposes of subsection (2)(c), in deciding whether or not to grant bail to a person charged with an offence mentioned in Part C of the First Schedule, the character and antecedents of the person charged, the need to protect the safety of the public order and where appropriate, the need to protect the safety of the victim or victims of the alleged offence, are to be primary considerations.”**

**9. The factors referred to in Part A are:**

**“PART A**

**In considering whether to grant bail to a defendant, the court shall have regard to the following factors—**

**(a) whether there are substantial grounds for believing that the defendant, if released on bail, would-**

**(i) fail to surrender to custody or appear at his trial;**

**(ii) commit an offence while on bail; or**

**(iii) interfere with witnesses or otherwise obstruct the course of justice, whether in relation to himself or any other person;**

**(b) whether the defendant should be kept in custody for his own protection or, where he is a child or young person, for his own welfare;**

**(c) whether he is in custody in pursuance of the sentence of a Court or any authority acting under the Defence Act;**

**(d) whether there is sufficient information for the purpose of taking the decisions required by this Part or otherwise by this Act;**

**(e) whether having been released on bail in or in connection with the proceedings for the offence, he is arrested pursuant to section 12;**

**(f) whether having been released on bail previously, he is charged subsequently either with an offence similar to that in respect of which he was so released or with an offence which is punishable by a term of imprisonment exceeding one year;**

**(g) the nature and seriousness of the offence and the nature and strength of the evidence against the defendant.”;**

**[10.]** In an application for bail pursuant to section 4(2)(c), the court is therefore required to consider the relevant factors set out in Part A of the First Schedule, as well as the provisions of section 2B. Further, when reference is made to section 4(2)(a), the court is required to consider whether the Applicant has not been tried within a time.



[11.] In considering these factors, I note that the Applicant is charged with serious offences, particularly having regard to the prevalence of firearms and firearm related offences in the community. I am mindful that this is not a free-standing ground for the refusal of a bail application, yet it is an important factor that I must consider in determining whether the accused is likely to appear for trial.

[12.] In the Court of Appeal decision of Jonathan Armbrister v The Attorney General SCCrApp. No 45 of 2011, it was stated that:

*“The seriousness of the offence, with which the accused is charged and the penalty which it is likely to entail upon conviction, has always been, and continues to be an important consideration in determining whether bail should be granted or not. Naturally, in cases of murder and other serious offences, the seriousness of the offence should invariably weigh heavily in the scale against the grant of bail”.*

[13.] I note also paragraph 30 of Jeremiah Andrews vs. The Director of Public Prosecutions SCCrApp No. 163 of 2019 where it states:

*“30. These authorities all confirm therefore that the seriousness of the offence, coupled with the strength of the evidence and the likely penalty which is likely to be imposed upon conviction, have always been, and continue to be important considerations in determining whether bail should be granted or not. However, these factors may give rise to an inference that the defendant may abscond. That inference can be weakened by the consideration of other relevant factors disclosed in the evidence. eg the applicant’s resources, family connections..”*

[14.] While no direct evidence has been provided that the Applicant will not appear for his trial, the Applicant is charged with attempted armed robbery and firearm offences which, in considering the possible penalty which would follow a conviction, particularly having regard to the antecedents of the Applicant, raises the issue of the likelihood of not appearing for trial.

[15.] That likelihood must be contrasted with the nature of the evidence against the Applicant. In Cordero McDonald v. The Attorney General SCCrApp. No. 195 of 2016, Allen P., at *paragraph 34* stated,

*“It is not the duty of a judge considering a bail application to decide disputed facts or law. Indeed, it is not expected that on such an*

*application a judge will conduct a forensic examination of the evidence. The judge must simply decide whether the evidence raises a reasonable suspicion of the commission of the offences by the appellant, such as to justify the deprivation of his liberty by arrest, charge and detention. Having done that he must then consider the relevant factors and determine whether he ought to grant him bail.”*

[16.] In considering the cogency of the evidence, I note the following statement from the Court of Appeal in *Stephon Davis v DPP SCCrApp. No. 20 of 2023*:

“In our view "strong and cogent evidence" is not the critical factor on a bail application. The judge is only required to evaluate whether the witness statements show a case that is plausible on its face. To put it another way, there must be some evidence before the court capable of establishing the guilt of the appellant. In essence, the test is prima facie evidence, comparable to what is required at the end of the prosecution's case in a criminal trial. We can find a useful summary of the strength of the evidence required at the end of the prosecution's case in the headnote to the Privy Council's decision in *Ellis Taibo* [11996] 48 WIR 74:

"On a submission of no case to answer, the criterion to be applied by the trial judge is whether there is material on which a jury could, without irrationality, be satisfied of guilt; if there is, the judge is required to allow the trial to proceed.”

[17.] In considering what has been placed before me, I note that the affidavit in response states that the Applicant was arrested within minutes in a vehicle which he accepts was at the scene, and of which he was the driver, and in which a firearm was found. While the Applicant has stated that this matter has nothing to do with him, and that he is a hard working young man who attends church and stays out of trouble, those are matters for trial. While bearing in mind that I am not conducting a trial of the matter, it is my view that the evidence relied upon by the prosecution in this case certainly rises to the level of a prima facie case as is required in *Stephon Davis* decision above.

[18.] In considering this matter, I accept that there has been no change in circumstances. Nevertheless, I have considered the matter afresh, and bear in mind that on an application for bail, the court is required to conduct a balancing exercise between the Applicant's right to liberty, and the need to protect the public. In conducting that exercise, I accept that the charges in this case are extremely serious, and the evidence cogent. I also note the previous convictions of the Applicant, which I consider support a need to protect the public.

[19.] With respect to the issue of the length of time of the Applicant's detention, I note that the legislation reads "has not been tried within a reasonable time", and not "is unlikely to be tried within a reasonable time". This is the same form of words used in Article 19 (3) of The Constitution and, in my view, do not require the court to look prospectively at whether a person will be detained for an unreasonable period of time, but whether an unreasonable period of time has already passed. This is not to grant license to the authorities to detain without trial for the three year period, as other factors may arise which make a particular period of detention unreasonable, but in the circumstances of this case, I am unable to accept that a trial on the fixed date would mean that the Applicant has been detained for an unreasonable period of time.

## **CONCLUSION**

[20.] In the circumstances of this case, given the previous convictions of the Applicant, the nature and cogency of the evidence, and the seriousness of the offences, I am not persuaded to exercise my discretion to grant bail at this time. I have considered whether conditions could be imposed to ensure attendance at trial, but I am satisfied that no conditions could be put in place to ameliorate the risk to public order, and that the further detention of the Applicant is necessary to preserve public order. Bail is therefore refused.

**Dated this 30<sup>th</sup> day of October A.D., 2024**



**Neil Brathwaite  
Justice**

