

IN THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS
IN THE SUPREME COURT
CRIMINAL LAW DIVISION
2020/CRI/bail/00034

BETWEEN

GREGORY DAVIS aka GREGORY SWEETING JR aka “BOYO”

Applicant

AND

DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC PROSECUTIONS

Respondent

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

Appearances: **Applicant Pro Se**
 Ms. Jacklyn Burrows for the Respondent

Hearing Date: **19th February A.D. 2025**

Ruling Date: **26th March A.D. 2025**

RULING ON BAIL

[1.] The Applicant seeks bail after having been charged in July 2024 with the offence of Armed Robbery. He is thirty-two years old, and claims to be the father of one daughter. The Applicant proclaims his innocence, and claims that he was not identified in this matter. He admits having previous convictions, but stated in his affidavit that he has no other pending matters. In that document the Applicant also claims that he is a hard working young man who stays out of trouble, and seeks to be released on bail pending his trial so that he can support himself. In addressing the court, the Applicant states that he is not a flight risk, as he has been on bail before and did not abscond. He claims not to know the witnesses in this matter, and says that he therefore is no threat to interfere with those witnesses.

[2.] The Respondent relies on the affidavit of Gary Rolle, Counsel in the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. The documents exhibited to that affidavit allege that on

11th July 2024 the complainant was operating as a ride share driver when she collected a regular client with two other males and took the female to one location, and then took the males to several other locations before hearing the sound of a round being chambered in a weapon. The men then directed the complainant to a dirt road, where she was chased from the vehicle, a silver Nissan. Two days later the Applicant and another male were arrested while driving a silver Nissan. The complainant participated in an identification procedure, and identified the Applicant as one of the persons who robbed her. A Criminal Records Antecedent Form is also attached, and indicates that the Applicant has been convicted seven times for Stealing, three times for Receiving, five times for House or Shop Breaking, Violation of Bail, Stealing from a Dwelling, Stealing from a Vehicle, Causing Damage, and Sacrilege. The convictions date from 2010 to the most recent in 2021. The Applicant also has a pending matter for Rape.

[3.] Counsel for the Respondent notes that the charges are serious, and attract a severe penalty, with cogent evidence, raising the likelihood of absconding. The Respondent further notes the previous convictions of the Applicant, and suggests that there is a severe risk of re-offending, with corresponding danger to public order. The court was therefore asked to refuse bail.

LAW AND ANALYSIS

[4.] 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...”

[5.] 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.”

[6.] 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”.

[7.] 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”.

[8.] 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.”;**

[9.] 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.

[10.] In considering those factors, I note that the Applicant is charged with a serious offence, involving the use of a firearm. With respect to the seriousness of the offence, 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.

[11.] 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”.

[12.] 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..

[13.] While no direct evidence has been provided that the Applicant will not appear for his trial, the Applicant is charged with a serious offence which, in considering the possible penalty which could follow a conviction, raises the issue of the likelihood of not appearing for trial. That likelihood is enhanced by the fact that the previous convictions of the Applicant would likely increase any sentence imposed upon a conviction.

[14.] 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.”

[15.] 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* [1996] 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."

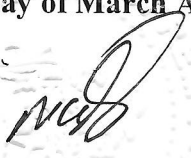
[16.] In reviewing what has been placed before me, while I bear in mind that the court is not to embark on a trial of the matter on the papers, I am satisfied that the evidence rises to the level of a strong prima facie case, as the Applicant has been identified by the complainant. This is also contrary to the statement of the Applicant that he was not identified.

[17.] With respect to the issue of public order, I note that the Applicant has been convicted for a number of offences in the past. A number of those offences involve offences of stealing and other offences of dishonesty, which are precursors to the offence of Armed Robbery. It must therefore be said that, notwithstanding the presumption of innocence, the Applicant clearly is not a person of good character, and now finds himself before the courts on cogent evidence, on charges which have escalated from his previous acknowledged conduct. I also bear in mind that the Applicant was on bail at the time he was charged with the present offence. With these facts in mind, I am satisfied that the Applicant poses a danger to public order and safety, and will re-offend if granted bail.

CONCLUSION

[18.] In the circumstances of this case, and for the above reasons, I am not persuaded to exercise my discretion to grant bail at this time. 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 and to prevent re-offending. Bail is therefore refused.

Dated this 26th day of March A.D., 2025



Neil Brathwaite
Justice