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Shooting that Rattled Shoppers in Parking Lot of Plaza West Started in Grove; Senator Calls for Action; Gunshots Captured on Audio

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A vehicle damaged by gunshots. In it was the victim of Monday night's shooting, who survived the onslaught without life-threatening injuries, according to police.

ST. CROIX — The gunshots that rattled shoppers in the parking lot of Plaza Extra West on Monday night, leaving one man injured, started in Estate Grove and continued to the parking lot of Plaza Extra West. The incident left one man injured.

A violent feud has been unfolding in Estate Grove, with shootings occurring over the weekend and into Monday, according to a police source.

A portion of Monday night's shooting was captured on audio, which has been shared on the popular communications app WhatsApp. Listen to it [here](#).

The shooting left the vehicle the gunshot victim was driving riddled with holes, but the victim managed to survive the onslaught without life-threatening injuries, according to a police report.

Crime in the territory, both violent incidents such as shootings and homicides, have surged this year. Twenty individuals have died in the USVI as a result of gun violence in 2020 so far: 12, St. Thomas, 7 St. Croix and one on St. John, according to the most recent numbers provided by the V.I.P.D. on April 27, along with four additional homicide deaths recorded since that time — three of which were on St. Thomas and one on St. Croix.



A vehicle damaged by gunshots. In it was the victim of Monday night's shooting, who survived the onslaught without life-threatening injuries, according to police.

Police Commissioner Trevor Velinor has not announced a strategy to combat the surge on St. Croix. However, agents with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives [are working closely](#) with the Virgin Islands Police Department to tamp down gun violence in some of the territory's worst hit communities, which include Hospital Ground and neighborhoods throughout St. Thomas, St. Croix and St. John.

That effort has already started on St. Thomas, with a \$15,000 reward being announced for information leading the arrest or those who killed three men in Hospital Ground early April. For St. Croix, however, heightened action has not been announced.

The Virgin Islands " ... is a place where we can make an impact on violent crime," said Robert Cekada, Special Agent in Charge of the ATF's Miami Field Division, which includes the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico.

Senator Kenneth Gittens, a former law enforcement officer, has repeatedly called for measures aimed at quelling criminal activity in the territory. On Tuesday night, he continued to apply pressure.

"First and foremost, we must get back to basics in terms of policing with officers concentrating in problem areas and more efforts to build relationships and trust within our neighborhoods. A more significant community-oriented police presence will deter criminals and ensure officers have a better understanding of the dynamics of any given situation," Mr. Gittens said. It also affords opportunity for residents to feel more comfortable in bringing forth pertinent information. In nearly every instance, there are witnesses to these violent acts. I know these witnesses are fearful, but we cannot be ruled by fear. We cannot allow these criminals to terrorize us into silence and submission."