

## Guns Entering USVI Not in Containers but via Airports and Mail by Virgin Islanders, Police Commissioner Reveals

Commissioner Mario Brooks said weapons are carried in by Virgin Islanders through airports, postal services, and even made using 3D printers. The current gun buyback has already doubled the results of the first round, with more events planned.

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Janeke Simon **March 27, 2025**

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Police Commissioner Mario Brooks on Wednesday dispelled long-held rumors that guns pouring into the U.S. Virgin Islands were coming from large containers by sea freight. Speaking during WTJX's town hall on crime, Mr. Brooks revealed that the weapons were being brought in by Virgin Islanders.

“It's our own bringing those guns in. It's our own,” he said at the event, which WTJX organized in conjunction with the Senate Committee on on Homeland Security, Justice and Public Safety.

“They're not coming in any containers. Those containers are being searched by CBP (Customs and Border Protection), there are random searches being conducted,” he said.

The commissioner revealed that residents are carrying the weapons with them on flights through the airports as well as through the U.S. Postal Service. “And we even had a gentleman right here in St. Croix building them with 3D printers,” he disclosed. “This is a reality. That's where the guns are coming in.”

As for the airports, the police commissioner disclosed that only certain airlines notify authorities when passengers with guns are coming on. “We've been fortunate to be able to stop some of them,” Mr. Brooks said. However, “if we got 100 plus last year, how much you think got by?”

Efforts to decrease the number of firearms in circulation include a gun buyback initiative, a project supported by Senators Franklin Johnson and Dwayne DeGraff. The second round of buybacks, which is [currently ongoing](#), has already yielded almost double the number of firearms recovered than the first iteration. With an upcoming buyback operation scheduled for St. John this Saturday, Mr. Brooks implored residents to take advantage of the opportunity to receive cash for turning in their illegal or unwanted firearms, no questions asked.

The weapons collected from across the territory – over 60 thus far this year – will be destroyed in a publicly staged event. “We're going to take all those guns out...and we're going to cut them up in front of everyone for you to see that we mean business,” Commissioner Brooks said.

The buybacks will continue while funding remains available, and while unwanted guns remain in the hands of the citizenry. “If we could get all of them, we'd be too happy for that,” he said, noting that the program was complementary to other efforts by the VIPD to get guns off the streets of the Virgin Islands.

Mr. Brooks concluded by emphasizing that community involvement and cooperation was the only way to stop the scourge of illegal firearms in the territory, which he called “a pandemic...worse than Covid.”

Wednesday's townhall in Christiansted at the Florence Williams Public Library was the last of two on St. Croix.