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J'Ouvert Rescheduled Following VIPD Request as Safety, Staffing Drive Crucian Festival Change

The Division of Festivals announced that J'Ouvert will now take place on December 31 after the VIPD warned of security challenges on New Year's Day. The department pointed to celebratory gunfire and limited manpower as reasons for the shift.

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2024 Jouvert celebrations on St. Croix. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM.

ST. CROIX — The Division of Festivals has announced a change to the Crucian Christmas Festival 2025–26 schedule following consultations with the V.I. Police Department regarding safety.

“Following conversations with the Virgin Islands Police Department (VIPD) regarding safety, we have made the following adjustments to the Crucian Christmas Festival schedule at the department’s request,” the Division stated. “The safety of our community is of the utmost importance, and we will continue to work closely with VIPD to ensure a successful and secure event for all.”

The revised schedule moves J’Ouvert to Wednesday, December 31, 2025, beginning at sunrise, in coordination with the Food Fair set for 12 p.m. The update is part of the official lineup for this year’s festival, which runs from December 26, 2025, through January 3, 2026, under the theme “Timeless Traditions in Every Mix.”

Attempts to reach VIPD Director of Communications Glen Dratte for comment were unsuccessful, but The Consortium has learned that the police department was the driving force behind the schedule change, despite strong resistance from the Division of Festivals. The division, which had spent months finalizing the schedule in coordination with the department, reportedly pushed back against the adjustment.

According to information obtained by The Consortium, the VIPD’s position is that the department lacks sufficient manpower to manage security if J’Ouvert were held on January 1, 2026 — Old Year’s Night/New Year’s Day, a period marked by widespread celebratory gunfire that frequently requires police response. Officials say staffing limitations make it difficult to secure multiple large-scale events occurring simultaneously across the island.

Even so, the rescheduled date of Wednesday, December 31, presents new challenges. That day already includes the Food Fair and coincides with the arrival of two cruise ships, according to the V.I. Port Authority’s [St. Croix cruise schedule](#). Still, sources familiar with the discussions said the department insisted on the change, leaving the Division of Festivals with little choice but to comply.

The last-minute adjustment may disrupt travel plans made around J’Ouvert festivities, and early online reaction suggests frustration among Virgin Islanders. Attempts to reach VIPD Commissioner Mario Brooks for comment were also unsuccessful.

The Crucian Christmas Festival, hosted by the V.I. Division of Festivals under the Department of Tourism, remains one of the territory’s largest cultural celebrations, featuring live music, parades, pageantry, and culinary showcases.

Festival schedule:

- Princess Pageant – Friday, December 26, 5 p.m.
- Calypso Monarch – Saturday, December 27, 8 p.m.
- Miss St. Croix Pageant – Sunday, December 28, 6 p.m.
- Cultural Night – Monday, December 29, 6 p.m.–1 a.m.
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Soca Monarch – Tuesday, December 30, 7 p.m.–1 a.m.

- J'Ouvert (Sunrise) and Food Fair – Wednesday, December 31 (Sunrise and 12 p.m.)
- Old Year's Celebration – Wednesday, December 31, 7 p.m.–1 a.m.
- International Latin Night – Thursday, January 1, 2026, 7 p.m.–1 a.m.
- Children's Parade – Friday, January 2, 10 a.m.
- Reggae Night – Friday, January 2, 7 p.m.–1 a.m.
- Adults Parade – Saturday, January 3, 11 a.m.
- Fireworks – Saturday, January 3, 9 p.m.
- Last Lap Village Night – Saturday, January 3, 7 p.m.–1 a.m.

For more information about the Crucian Christmas Festival 2025–26, visit www.usvifestivals.vi or www.visitusvi.com

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