

logo not found or type unknown

National Guard Leader Says Youth Violence Requires Early Intervention, Home Support and Stronger Follow-Up After Programs

Major General Kodjo Knox-Limbacker told lawmakers that some young people return to the same environments Youth About Face temporarily removed them from, while senators urged broader youth programs amid recent murders and gun violence.

Community Center / **Published On June 18, 2026 06:56 AM /**

Nelcia Charlemagne **June 18, 2026**

Image not found or type unknown



Major General Kodjo Knox-Limbacker, center, testifies before lawmakers during the Office of the Adjutant General's budget hearing, where he discussed youth violence and the Youth About Face Program. By. V.I. LEGISLATURE.

Major General Kodjo Knox-Limbacker told lawmakers Wednesday that the territory's youth are "falling victim to their own inability to control their emotions," using the Office of the Adjutant General's budget hearing to highlight both the value and limits of the V.I. National Guard's Youth About Face Program.

His remarks came as the territory was grappling with four murders recorded within the space of a few days, adding urgency to a discussion about youth behavior, violence, home environments and the need for sustained intervention.

Some young people in the territory, MG Knox-Limbacker said, struggle with conflict resolution, financial hardship, anger management and violence. Through his work with hundreds of young people in the Youth About Face Program, he said participants "often have misguided values over appropriate response to perceived disrespect from social media, peer groups, and parent modeling."

Those influences, he said, can lead young people to adopt "dysfunctional" behaviors that result in the "infliction of bodily harm on others, murder, or their own death."

"This reality needs to change, and the change must start at home," he declared.

The Youth About Face Program already works with students, but MG Knox-Limbacker said "appropriate behaviors must be positively reinforced as early as pre-school..." While the Virgin Islands National Guard has seen "remarkable success" in helping students enrolled in the program graduate from high school, he said outcomes remain mixed.

His testimony pointed to a larger challenge facing the program. Participants seeking "real change," he said, often leave the territory "to places that provide them with an environment for continued success like universities, vocational schools, military, even an Equine Racing Academy."

By contrast, MG Knox-Limbacker said, a "significant number" of young people who remain in the territory "have fallen victim to the non-supportive environment that the program temporarily gave them refuge from."

To date, 198 at-risk youth have been enrolled in the program territory-wide. Of that number, 45 did not complete the program and failed. The figure includes 15 participants on St. Croix and 30 in the St. Thomas/St. John district.

"If they go back to the environment that they were in before they came to the program, it seems likely they're not going to be successful," MG Knox-Limbacker told Senator Angel Bolques Jr.

According to the Adjutant General, there have been "two deaths of personnel who were in the program." Others who later became incarcerated, he said, "went right back to the environment that we were trying to keep them out of."

Senator Bolques acknowledged the National Guard's continued work and connected the discussion to the territory's broader youth violence concerns.

"It's clear that we have a youth gun violence problem on our hands," he said.

Mr. Bolques encouraged other government agencies to "ramp up their youth programs, because we can see it's desperately needed at this time."

Senator Marvin Blyden also said more young people should have access to programs like Youth About Face.

“There should be a larger number of individuals going to the type of program, because it does a lot for them,” he said.

The Youth About Face Program was described as part of a longer-term response to anti-social behavior among young people. In the short term, the Virgin Islands Police Department is expected to work with community stakeholders to address the territory’s violence problem.

Senator Kenneth Gittens asked whether Governor Albert Bryan Jr. had raised the possibility of having the Virgin Islands National Guard assist the Police Department. MG Knox-Limbacker said no.

Mr. Gittens said he hoped the question “triggers some discussion now.