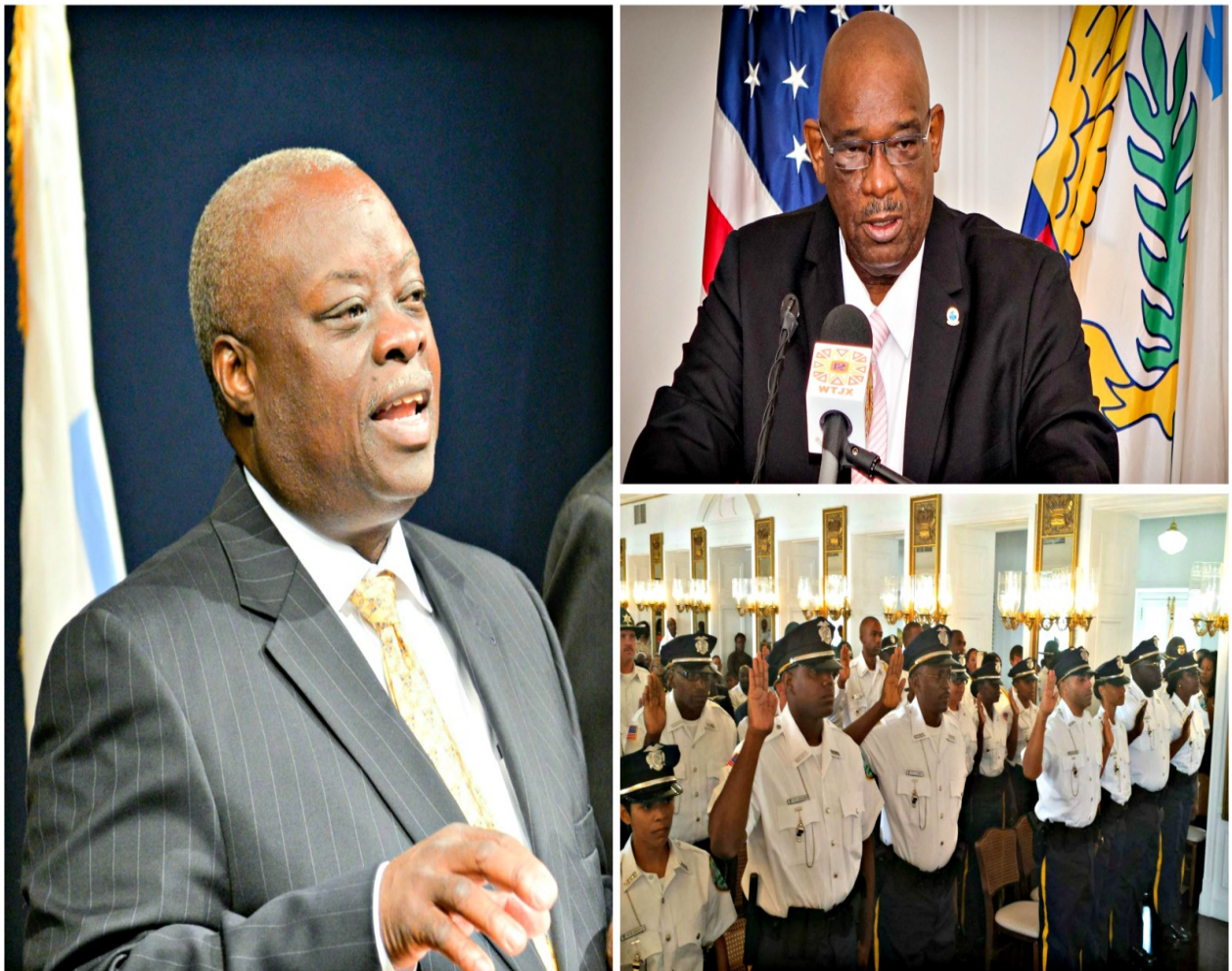


The Virgin Islands Consortium

Police Officers May Have To Be Imported Because Locals Can't Pass '7th Grade' Level Test, Mapp Says

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Ernice Gilbert **February 17, 2015**



Governor Kenneth Mapp said at a recent press conference that the Virgin Islands Police Department may have to import new police officers from the U.S. mainland and elsewhere because local candidates are having difficulty passing a seventh-grade-level entrance exam.

The governor made the remarks when *VI Consortium* asked about his campaign promise of hiring 250 police officers upon taking office, and in light of the escalating gun violence in the territory. Just Monday, [police found an 18-year-old St. Croix man](#) at the back of an apartment in Concordia, Frederiksted dead from multiple gunshot wounds.

Mapp revealed that his administration was already working on implementing the campaign promise; however, had been having challenges with recruitment.

"As Commissioner Richards indicated, we've actually begun that process and believe we have some issues with testing," Mapp said. "In fact, most of us in Government House want to sit the test because we don't understand how this test that's at a seventh-grade written level -- the quad section uses no more than two digits in the arithmetic section -- and we had twenty-eight people sit this test a few weeks ago, and three people passed.

"Part of the assessment is to determine why are we having these kinds of numbers, what's the issue, and are we targeting the right pool of folks for law enforcement in the community," the governor said.

Mapp also made known that the VIPD has seen difficulty in hiring the right people for the job -- those with a level of education that could perform the basic duties of a police officer. Because of these issues, Mapp said, hiring police officers who are not from the territory might be the solution.

"The experience has been to get the bodies," Mapp continued. "Getting the bodies who do not remain in the department, getting the bodies that cannot perform, [and] when we say perform, [we mean] write reports, being able to testify clearly and concisely in court, and do the admin work of a police officer, and be able to relate with the public in communicating and speaking clearly, and decisively becomes a challenge, so we may not be focusing on the right type of candidates.

"Maybe we need to be really talking about looking for candidates with college credits and moving to a broad basis, rather than saying a GED or high school diploma is what we want. And then we're trying to dumb the test down," the governor said. "I only use that term of reducing the level and competency of the test, just to get someone to pass it, to say that we have a police officer."

Yet, with all the challenges facing the police department's recruiting efforts, the governor held a strong stance on "getting boots" on the ground, as it is critical, he says, in his administration's efforts to secure the community.

"Those targets that we talked about in terms of numbers are real, we have to get those boots on the ground. If we are unable to fashion a strategy to get them on the ground from the community, we're going to have to import them. But we cannot have an absence of police in the territory, and expect our community and our residents to be safe," he said.