

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Mapp Announces Joint Effort With Feds For St. Thomas Carnival Safety And Beyond

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ST. CROIX -- At a press conference held at Government House on Monday morning, Governor Kenneth Mapp, flanked by Lieutenant Governor Osbert Potter, U.S. Attorney Ronald W. Sharpe, Virgin Islands Police Department (VIPD) Commissioner nominee Delroy Richards, and Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Agency (VITEMA) Director Mona Barnes, announced a partnership between local and federal forces to shore up this year's Carnival in St. Thomas.

The partnership is the first of many cooperative efforts moving forward to better protect the territory's residence, according to the governor.

"We're here this morning to talk specifically about security, crime and law enforcement as we go forward during the carnival week and beyond," Mapp began.

The territory's leader made known that upon being elected, he called Attorney Sharpe to discuss how a partnership could be formed between the federal and local government in relation to law enforcement, and revealed that after the success of the first meeting, four work sessions followed.

Sharpe then invited the governor to his office where Mapp was able to meet with the special agent in charge of the Drug Enforcement Administration, representatives of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, Customs and Border Protection, Department of Homeland Security and sub-agencies like the Transportation Security Administration (TSA).

There, the governor said they were able to talk "in a very broad sense about the issues occurring in the Virgin Islands, and how we need to come together to deal with the issues of crime and violence in this community."

Following the meeting, Mapp said he became confident that St. Thomas will be safe during carnival and encouraged residents to come out and enjoy the festivities.

"We are prepared to say to the people of the Virgin Islands that you should come out, enjoy the carnival because between the local and the federal government and our law enforcement agencies and communities, we're doing everything in our power, sparing no resources to ensure that the carnival activities and events are going to be safe," Mapp said.

The steps taken by local and federal agencies are already taking hold, Mapp revealed, adding that some people coming into the islands have already noticed stepped up security measures taking place at the territory's airports.

"You're going to see more of these activities in inter-island travel, and you're going to see more of these activities throughout the community, particularly in St. Thomas during this week," the governor said.

Speaking on the partnership, Attorney Sharpe said the collaboration has been "a long time coming," and confirmed that various federal agencies had already boosted their security efforts territory-wide during the carnival season, with a long-term vision to maintain a sustained crime-fighting effort on all three islands.

"These efforts, as the governor mentioned, include shoring up our airports and seaports, [and] also focusing on getting the most violent offenders off the streets, getting firearms off the streets and more generally, addressing violent crimes wherever they happen, as well as white color and other types of crimes wherever they may occur in the community," Sharpe said.

VIPD Police Commissioner nominee Delroy Richards said he is appreciative of the assistance that Attorney Sharpe's office has been able to provide.

"Through his efforts and the efforts of others, we have been able to receive training from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) -- all supervisors in the territory," Richards said.

Aside from supervisors, Richards revealed that all members of the VIPD were "being brought up to speed" thanks to the efforts of Attorney Sharpe, and assured the community that the force is prepared for the carnival season.

Lastly, Lieutenant Governor Osbert Potter used his opportunity to remind the listening audience of the rhetoric used on the campaign trail while he and the governor were seeking office, and of their effective slogan, 'A Time to Build', stating that the partnership between the local and federal law enforcement agencies is a perfect example of the message they were trying to convey while campaigning.

"We cannot do it alone on the local government side and the federal government cannot do it alone on their side," Potter said. "So we are taking extreme efforts and pride in building that partnership to make sure that people of this territory are the beneficiaries of a safe community."

Before closing his remarks, Potter warned of gangs looking for "revenge wars" during J'Ouvert morning -- the time when the largest crowds come out to revel -- and said enforcement officers would spare no effort in bringing offenders to justice.

Potter also asked residents for help.

"Many times you in the public may have heard something, or may be aware of something that might be coming down in J'Ouvert because that is the time that individuals feel that they can easily get away with it because it's a big crowd and they can hide in the crowd. But we are asking that as simple as it may seem to you, if you know of anything or have any kind of information regarding any group, or any combination of these gangs giving any idea that they're going to try to use the cover of J'Ouvert to retaliate, please come forward and get us that information," Potter said.

Governor Mapp on Friday signed a proclamation granting commissioners and heads of government agencies administrative leave as the territory's 63rd Carnival takes hold in St. Thomas.

Dubbed 'Culture to the Extreme, VI Carnival 2015?', this year's event is expected to attract thousands to the island, according to a press release from Government House.

The 2015 Virgin Islands' Carnival Food, Arts and Crafts Fair, being held on Wednesday, April 20 in the Emancipation Garden, has been named the 'Alvin's Cultural Workshop' in honor of Alvin Turnbull.

J'Overt takes place on Thursday, April 30, children's parade on Friday, May 1 and adults parade on Saturday, May 2.

The St. Thomas/St. John District administrative leave days are as follows:

- Wednesday, April 29, 2015 – Food, Arts and Crafts Fair Day – 12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.
- Thursday, April 30, 2015 – J'Ouvert – 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

The territory-wide administrative leave is on Friday, May 1 from 8:00 a.m. through 5:00 p.m.

