

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Assessment Of VIPD By New York-Based Firm To Commence On May 4, Mapp Confirms

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St. Croix -- During a speech on Tuesday, March 17 at the Seatrade Cruise Global conference in Miami, Gov. Kenneth Mapp — as part of his ongoing efforts to push forward the territory's tourism product — announced a new partnership between the Government of the Virgin Islands and a New York-based firm to help combat the rise in violent crime on the islands.

On Monday, during a press conference held at Government House, the governor confirmed that the partnership will commence on May 4.

The firm, [T&M Protection Resources, LLC](#), was instrumental in helping turnaround the New York Police Department (NYPD) during former Mayor Rudi Giuliani's tenure.

The governor said the assessment will take a number of weeks to complete, and that T&M will be given authority to go through all of the territory's law enforcement entities, including the VIPD, Port Authority officials, the enforcement unit at the Department of Planning and Natural Resources, and officers at the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs, "as we look at how we want to move forward with professionalizing law enforcement in the territory," Mapp said.

During a Public Finance Authority (PFA) board meeting held in March, [a resolution was passed](#) to authorize a contract of up to \$300,000 for T&M. Calling the undertaking a "Police Assessment Study," the resolution said the study will primarily focus on "police personnel matters, organizational structure and management, use of technology, and crime reduction and prevention strategies." Furthermore, the study is expected to assess the VIPD's "facilities and fleet for adequacy and equipment needs."

T&M "will be working closely with our police commissioner and our chiefs," the governor said.

After the assessment, Mapp said the territory must decide on a strategy moving forward. He reiterated the [difficulty in local recruitment and retention](#), and said part of T&M's assessment will be to determine why the problem perpetuates.

The governor said it is important to understand "What is it we're doing wrong that we can have a police brass of 40 or 50 individuals, graduate 20 or 25, and within a year, we only have 4 or 5 in the department."

The territory's leader revealed that the assessment process is expected to be candid, and said law enforcement officers will be approached, unsupervised, by T&M and invited to interviews. He encouraged the officers to give earnest details of the challenges faced doing their jobs in the islands, stating that it's the only way to "professionalize" the territory's law enforcement arm and better protect residents.

"I want our officers to know that they're going to be approached, they're going to be invited to interviews and assessments without their supervisors being present and we want to encourage them to be very candid and open about their experiences, and what they believe are the shortcomings and difficulties in them being able to do their jobs, and being able to improve and professionalize our law enforcement in the community," the governor said.

"We want that process to be very transparent, and we want the truth out of the officers in terms of their experiences, so that we can put a complete strategy and reformation of our law enforcement community, so we can bring the standards and the safety and security of the community up to date," he concluded.