

The Virgin Islands Consortium

VIPD Has Taken 45 Guns Off The Streets Since January; Calls For Reopening Of Crime Stoppers USVI

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Police Commissioner Delroy Richards

ST. CROIX -- At a press conference organized to make known steps that the VIPD has taken to fight the upswing of criminal activity in the territory, Police Commissioner Delroy Richards, with Police Chief Arthur Hector, Sr., at his side, revealed on Wednesday that the force has confiscated 45 illegal guns territory-wide since January.

"We have aggressively, with the resources that we have, confront, we have targeted -- we have arrested as much as we possibly can," Richards said. With guns on display on a

table as proof of the VIPD's efforts, the commissioner said "these weapons that you see on the table are weapons that have been confiscated from January to now."

Richards said the VIPD has been successful in its efforts to "identify possible persons of interest on a number of high profile cases, and we have began to utilize all our crime-fighting capabilities." The commissioner, who has a long leadership history in both the private and public sectors, said the VIPD has begun the process of filling positions on the cold case squad in an effort to solve cases that residents might think the force has ignored.

"All major cases are being pursued to the extent that we have returned experience detectives to the cold case squad," Richards said.

Through the 45 guns recovered, police were able to make 23 arrests. Two of the illegal firearms were taken off murder victims and 20 were confiscated through tips provided by the community. Richards also agreed that utilizing all law enforcement officers in the territory to fight crime would produce even greater results, but he said the VIPD, whenever it calls on other agencies, must find funds to pay for the extra manpower. However, like he made known during the department's [budget hearing](#), "the police department has in its coffers zero dollars for overtime expenditures."

Richards also called for the reopening of Crime Stoppers USVI. The organization [shuttered on June 30](#), citing a lack of collaboration with the VIPD, according Judi Buckley, co-founder, chairperson and board member of Crime Stoppers USVI.

"There's been a real decline in the last couple of years and what Crime Stoppers really needs is for VIPD to hire someone who's specifically dedicated to working with us and making sure that all our tips are followed up on, investigated and communicated back to us so we know when we can pay a reward, and that hasn't happened," Buckley told *The Consortium*.

However, Richards, who announced the appointment of Lt. Maria Colon-Jones on St. Thomas and Crime Scene Technician Julisha Lansiquot on St. Croix as "point persons" for the organization, said, "I want to make very clear the Virgin Islands Police Department, from day one, has supported Crime Stoppers."

The commissioner said while he would not get into a back-and-forth with the organization, he would have liked to be given the opportunity to address the problem before Crime Stoppers announced its closure.