

The Virgin Islands Consortium

With Little Resources To Fight Crime, VIPD Issues Message To Teens: 'Think About Yourself'

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ST. CROIX -- The Virgin Islands Police Department said on Wednesday that it's working hard to quell the uptick of crime in the territory. The force, Commissioner Delroy Richards said, is doing its best with a shoestring budget that prevents the department from effectively carrying out its duties. Pictured above, 45 guns VIPD collected since January.

Richards agreed that community policing was the "way to go," but again, money remains an issue, reiterating what he said at a recent budget hearing, where it was revealed that while the VIPD had zero dollars allocated for overtime, the department was on track to expend some \$11 million of its budget on extra pay, which means other indelible segments of the force will suffer.

With no immediate solution as the territory's budget deficit remains at the \$120 million level, the commissioner called on the territory's youth to think twice before committing crimes.

"I am reaching out to the 18 to 19-year-olds on the street committing these acts: Think about yourself. Think about your family," Richards said. "Most of these acts are retaliatory -- don't ever believe if you do this, their family or connections aren't going to reach out and retaliate."

The commissioner acknowledged the upsurge in retaliatory shootings territory-wide, "and we are also aware in two cases currently being investigated, the victims were randomly



From Left, Police Commissioner

Delroy Richards, Sr. and St. Croix Police Chief Arthur Hector, Sr.

And with the increase in crimes comes growth in the amounts of calls for service received. Richards said the number is so great that before officers leave to respond to incidents, more calls needing immediate attention come in -- a reality that has greatly strained the department's already depleted resources.

"The police department cannot sustain the cost," Richards conceded.

As mentioned at prior press conferences, Richards doubled down on the idea of crime prevention, and said the underlying causes must be addressed. In February, [the commissioner said](#) a main cause for the ongoing gun violence in the territory has to do with the territory's leaders, and various government agencies, failing young people. Richards believes this is made evident by much of the violent crime taking place in the same neighborhoods with every new generation.

"The problem that I have is that we seem to have failed somewhere along the line — and when I say we, not just the police department, because these guys that are in [Hospital Ground](#) today, and in those same communities who are committing these crimes, are not the same individuals who were there back in 1994 — some of them weren't even born," Richards said. "But it is so much of a cycle that, as the older ones are removed, whether by incarceration, death, or they relocated, we have a younger group in the same community, so it tells me that somewhere along the line, we have lost them or somebody forgot them."

Acknowledging the root of the problem as a broken system that has neglected its young people, Richards said there must be efforts put in place prior to young Virgin Islanders' turning to a lifestyle of crime and violence.

"It must be a multi-agency response to what is happening," Richards said. "The police can only do the patrols, the police can only do the apprehensions, but you know what, there must be intervention prior to all of that. If not, this cycle will continue."

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