

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Violent Weekend Leaves Six Injured From Gunfire

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Ernice Gilbert **November 30, 2015**



ST. CROIX -- The long Thanksgiving weekend left six men -- all on St. Croix -- injured by gunfire, according to multiple reports issued by the VIPD.

The first, which occurred on Thanksgiving Day, happened at roughly 11:11 p.m., when the 911 emergency call center was alerted of gunfire discharge in the Marley Housing Community, located in Estate Two Brothers, according to Kevin Jackson, VIPD's public information officer.

As responding officers made their way to the site, the victim of the shooting phoned the emergency call center and identified himself, stating that he required assistance but refused to provide any additional information to the dispatcher concerning the

circumstances surrounding the shooting.

The call center then received a call from the Juan F. Luis Hospital's emergency room, reporting that a male individual had arrived at the facility by private vehicle seeking medical treatment for a gunshot wound.

Officers and detectives arrived at the facility and met with the victim, who said that while he was walking on Dorsch Beach, an unknown vehicle drove up to him and gunfire was discharged. The victim, a 23-year-old, added that he immediately called 911 and was transported to JFL by private vehicle.

Then on the night of Saturday, November 28, a drive-by shooting, [first reported by The Consortium](#), left four individuals injured by gunfire, with two of the victims sustaining "serious" wounds, according to VIPD Commissioner Delroy Richards.

The incident took place just after 9:00 p.m. on the Melvin Evans Highway, right after the first Estate Carlton stoplights when heading west. According to Mr. Richards, citing a preliminary report, the four injured men, who were transported to JFL via ambulance, told officers that their car had gotten a flat tire, and that they were awaiting someone to bring a replacement, when an individual drove near them and opened fire.

But the case took a strange twist, Mr. Richards said, when another individual, who was badly injured in his hand, arrived at the hospital stating that he had been shot in Estate La Grange around the same time that the Estate Carlton incident transpired. "We're trying to connect the dots," Mr. Richards told The Consortium, adding that the investigation was still in its early stages.

A VIPD unit was dispatched to JFL to interview the men, while other officers were on the scene still investigating the occurrence — which included shell casings and the vehicle that the men were traveling in.

On the highway, The Consortium saw at least two officers redirecting vehicles that were attempting to head west through the first Estate Carlton stoplights. The officers ordered motorists to take the right intersection that leads to the Queen Mary Highway (Centerline Road) instead. And at least four police vehicles were parked close to the crime scene while detectives conducted their investigation.

Motorists were allowed to travel west to east, however, and some vehicles slowed to a crawl, trying to establish what was going on.

Concerning the Estate La Grange incident, as it happens, a subsequent police report suggested that occurrence, which Mr. Richards said the VIPD was trying to piece together, was not connected to the drive-by on the highway. According to the force's latest report, the Estate La Grange incident, which occurred around the same time as the drive-by episode, saw a 25-year-old male being shot while walking in the area of the Paul E. Joseph Stadium heading towards Estate LaGrange. He said an unknown vehicle approached and opened fire; prompting him to run away from the vehicle. The victim said he later realized that he was shot, and caught a ride to the hospital.

The young man sustained a gunshot wound to his hand and was unable to provide officers with a description of the vehicle or shooter. Police say they're continuing their

investigations into all these matters, and are asking the community's assistance in bringing the perpetrators to justice by calling 911 or the anonymous tip service, CrimeStoppers USVI at 1-800-222-(TIPS) 8477 or go to www.crimestoppersusvi.org.

And in light of the surge in violent activity, Senator Kenneth Gittens has been calling for stepped-up police presence and strategies; especially during the Crucian Christmas Carnival season, which had a pre-kickoff recently with Carnival Meets the Runway, and officially sets off on December 11 with the Party Monarch Eliminations.

"We cannot have our residents living as hostages in their own homes because of fear of falling victim to the criminal element. This violence is crippling the social and economic climate in our community because residents are not even feeling safe anywhere. This cannot continue," Mr. Gittens said.

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