

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Mapp Signs Executive Order Assigning All Peace Officers To VIPD; Former Chief Winsburt McFarlane Leading Spec Ops

Exclusive / **Published On December 17, 2015 12:55 PM /**

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ST. CROIX -- Governor Kenneth Mapp has taken some bold steps in an effort to crush the criminal element here, signing an executive order that places all law enforcement officers in the territory under the command of the Virgin Islands Police Department, Police Commissioner Delroy Richards confirmed to The Consortium this morning.

The publication was informed by well-placed sources that the governor had shifted former Police Chief Winsburt McFarlane -- currently heading the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs' enforcement arm -- back to the police department, which was also

confirmed by Mr. Richards this morning. The police commissioner said he requested of the governor that Mr. McFarlane join him for a period of time as he formulate a strategy to squash the rising crime in the islands. Mr. Richards has given Mr. McFarlane "full oversight over special operations and initiatives on St. Croix."

"We have gone on the offensive," he said.

The news comes following unrelenting gun violence in the territory, as incidents in the last four days left 12 people with gunshot wounds. And after calls from Senator Kenneth Gittens that the governor declare a state of emergency.

"We're acting like nothing is going on in this territory. And as we're supposed to be talking about economic development and shepherding these islands into prosperity, each and everyday we're hearing about another shooting, about another death. It is sad and I want to take this opportunity once again to call on the administration and say let's meet and put our heads together so that we can address the crime situation that we're facing in this territory," Mr. Gittens said during a Senate session in St. Thomas on Tuesday.

"I'm a resident here and I have no where [else] to go; and I'll be damned if I allow any thug to run me out of these islands," the lawmaker added.

The very same sources who informed The Consortium of Mr. McFarlane's shift back to the VIPD, also told the publication that the governor was set to announce a state of emergency. That action came in the form of an executive order; while steering clear of a state of emergency declaration, which many have said would negatively impact the islands' economy by causing unnecessary alarm.

Mr. Richards told The Consortium that VIPD officers were out in strong numbers last night in the area of La Grange, where multiple shots were fired. Officers recovered three guns, he revealed, reiterating that the VIPD was in the process of formulating a strategy to push back and squash crime in the territory.

The police commissioner said he would not be revealing what tactics that would be used to root out the criminal element; as to not alert lawbreakers of the VIPD's plans. But, he said, the days of being on the defensive were coming to an end with this latest effort, and with all law enforcement officers now under his command, Mr. Richards is expecting a visible decrease in crime overtime.

"We are on them," he said.

Feature Image: VIPD collecting evidence at the scene of a homicide that occurred in Frederiksted on October 26.

Image Credit: VIC.