

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Police To Residents With Firearms: Do Not Fire Celebratory Gunshots On Old Year's Night

VIC News / **Published On December 28, 2015 10:42 PM /**

Staff **December 28, 2015**



ST. THOMAS -- As New Year's Eve approaches, the Virgin Islands Police Department says it wants to actively remind the public that not only is celebratory gunfire illegal, it is dangerous; and the consequences and risks thereof can be significant and serious.

That's according to a press release the VIPD issued late Monday, adding that celebratory gunfire or the discharge of a firearm into the air in celebration could cause serious harm. According to the release, the intention may be a celebratory shot toward the sky, but the consequences of that moment can be disastrous for a neighbor or someone blocks away, "because what goes up must come down."

The VIPD says it's utilizing a unique software program called ShotSpotter, which provides law enforcement with real-time access to the [locations where gunfire are being discharged](#) within particular dense population areas throughout the territory. The overview maps of St. Croix and St. Thomas included as the feature image of this story, shows how the technology allows the VIPD to see exactly where gunfire was discharged on New Year's Eve 2014.

The force says it is committed to a policy of zero tolerance of illegal gun use, and that its mission is to protect the quality of life for all residents throughout the community by creating an environment of enhanced safety and security.

During the upcoming holiday period, the police department will be deploying patrol officers in specific areas of the territory that have the highest amount of illegal gun activity as recorded by ShotSpotter on New Year's Eve last year. Officers will respond to all ShotSpotter activations throughout the islands, and particularly in high activity areas, and will arrest anyone caught discharging a firearm in public. Officers will be deployed throughout the territory to maintain the peace, prevent crime and violence, and arrest drunk drivers, the release added.

The VIPD again stressed the dangers of celebratory gunfire, reminding that it can cost somebody their life, and urged those thinking of participating in the illegal activity to abstain from doing so.

"If you do, be advised that we will use all our resources to find who you are and to prosecute you. And if you know or see someone who's discharging celebratory gunfire, call 911 immediately," reads the release.

Charges for discharging a firearm in the territory can range anywhere from a misdemeanor to a felony that can result in one being sentenced to years in prison.