

The Virgin Islands Consortium

V.I.P.D. Finalizing Contract With National Network Of Safe Communities In 'Bold' Effort To Curb Violence

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ST. CROIX -- The Virgin Islands Police Department is in the final stages of an agreement with the National Network of Safe Communities -- which supports communities implementing strategic interventions to reduce violence and community disorder, minimize arrests and incarceration, enhance police legitimacy, and rebuild relationships between law enforcement and distressed communities -- in what Police Commissioner Delory Richards on Monday told The Consortium is a bold strategy of the Mapp administration to eliminate the decade-long high level of criminal activity that has plagued the territory.

The N.N.S.C., which was introduced in 2009, says it's committed to building a community of practice that operates along the following set of guidelines: do no harm, strengthen communities' capacity to prevent violence, enhance legitimacy, offer help to those who want it, get deterrence right and use enforcement strategically, according to a description on the organization's [website](#).

"We are planning on bringing them to the territory for a while," Mr. Richards said, although he could not reveal the cost of the contract since negotiations were underway. "With the level of violence that we have here in the territory, you've got to try everything to normalize the situation."

Mr. Richards also revealed that the effort was one initiated by Governor Kenneth Mapp, and that the program's project manager will come from Government House.

"It's going to involve several other commissioners as well," Mr. Richards added. "You have to involve everybody in order for the effort to be successful, including Dept. of Labor, Human Services -- it's a broad-based effort that must involve the community. And we're calling it one of our bold initiatives, because we have to stop this cycle one way or the other."

And Mr. Richards said Dr. David Hall, president of the University of the Virgin Islands, will be involved as well, as education plays a critical role in curbing violence. "It's going to help the young folks of this territory," he said.

The N.N.S.C.'s strategies have been deployed in more than 60 U.S. cities, according to its website. Evidence of the efficacy of the strategies has mounted steadily over the years as more and more cities put them to the test. Most recently, the website says, a Campbell Collaboration Systematic Review -- the gold standard in assessing the body of evidence in social science interventions -- found "strong empirical evidence" for the effectiveness of the strategies to address serious violence crime and overt drug markets.

After implementing N.N.S.C.'s strategies, Cincinnati saw a 34 percent reduction in crime; Boston saw a 63 percent reduction in youth homicides; Nashville saw a 55 percent reduction in drug offenses; and Lowell, Massachusetts saw a 44 percent reduction in gun assaults through Project Safe Neighborhoods.

Mr. Richards is hoping the territory will see similar -- if not better -- results.

[Watch the original video](#)