

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Potter Says He Supports Shakeup At V.I.P.D.

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ST. CROIX -- Lieutenant Governor Osbert Potter on Friday said he supported the decision by Virgin Islands Police Department Commissioner Delroy Richards [to change V.I.P.D. leadership](#) in both districts, stating that Mr. Richards must do what it takes quell criminal activity in the Virgin Islands.

Mr. Potter also mentioned the five-year consent decree that was levied by the federal government in 2009, which was extended, as potentially playing a role in the commissioner's decision.

"It is the police commissioner's duty and responsibility to put in place what he feels to be the most effective leadership to manage police operations. In his effort to comply with the

ongoing consent decree, Commissioner Richards is encouraged to evaluate his personnel and make adjustments as he deems necessary and appropriate. In the final analysis, it is the safety of the community that is of utmost importance," Mr. Potter said.

On Wednesday, Mr. Richards confirmed to this publication that he had dismissed former St. Croix Police Chief Arthur Hector, Sr. and former St. Thomas Police Chief Darren Foy, replacing them with Winsbut McFarlande to lead the St. Croix arm of the force, and Jason Marsh in St. Thomas.

"We obviously assess the V.I.P.D.'s organizational structure and decided that it was time to make some modifications, and those modifications were done," Mr. Richards said. "I think that whenever decisions are made, they are made after careful deliberation that the department needs to move in a different direction."

Mr. Richards, stating that he was not satisfied with the current performance of the force as it relates to crime-fighting, said that leadership changes were paramount to his strategy of quelling criminal activity, and building the community's confidence in the V.I.P.D.'s ability to protect residents.

"Generally, changes were needed in the operational structure of the department and we did that in hopes of garnering different results," he said.

Mr. Richards confirmed that Mr. Hector had submitted retirement papers. As for former chief Foy, Mr. Richards was not sure whether he had determined what his next move would be. Even so, "both individuals — though they were relieved of their duties — would still have been entitled to return to their classified positions," Mr. Richards said.

As for the two men placed in charge of the V.I.P.D.'s arms here and in St. Thomas, Mr. Richards said there were multiple candidates to choose from, but Mr. McFarland and Mr. Marsh came out on top.

We looked at the candidates, and McFarlande was already assisting the V.I.P.D. with operational needs, and of all the candidates, he obviously came out ahead," Mr. Richards said. Indeed, Mr. McFarlande was at the helm of a successful effort in December to crush gun violence. At the time, a calm came over this island as police were randomly erecting checkpoints and conducting searches. The [streets became quiet](#). Mr. Richards is expecting similar initiatives from Mr. McFarlande.

Mr. Marsh was acting director in the force's Internal Affairs Bureau for almost a year. He is also a former member of the F.B.I.'s Violent Street Crime Task Force and has led both operational and administrative roles; experience the commissioner is depending on to see robust change in St. Thomas.

"I have issued a mandate that I want to see change, and I'm going to monitor to ensure that the mandate is carried out," he said. "At the end of the day it's not about Delroy. I think it's also for this community who we have taken an oath to serve. The community has cried out for change, and it was one of the things we couldn't ignore."

Mr. Richards was sure to praise both Hector and Foy for their service, commenting that they have served the V.I.P.D. with honor for years. However, he reiterated that changes were necessary.

“I don’t expect to see the same. If we attempt to implement changes and it’s unsuccessful, then we must change our strategy. We can’t keep going down the narrow lane all the time. Change must come for the betterment.”

Mr. Richards said the force was steadily “nipping at crime” in St. Thomas, the island that has seen most of the violent crimes in recent times. He made known that [police had arrested and charged](#) a suspect in a recent killing that occurred near a McDonald’s restaurant in St. Thomas, and that the force would not relent in its efforts to bring criminals to justice.

“We are looking at all cases. We are creating a violent crime task force within the department and all those cases are being looked at in that task force approach.”

Feature Image: Crime scene in Campo Rico on [March 13](#).

Image Credit: VIC.