

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Mapp Sends Thoughts And Prayers To Orlando Victims; Says Nothing Of Homicides In V.I.

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ST. THOMAS -- Governor Kenneth Mapp issued a statement following the mass murder of 50 people at a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida, where 53 more were injured after a gunman stormed the building and opened fire on innocent patrons. The governor expressed sadness and offered prayers, calling the incident -- the biggest mass murder in America's history -- a "senseless tragedy."

"Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims, their families and the good people of the city of Orlando following the senseless tragedy that occurred there today," Mr. Mapp said. He also ordered that flags in the territory be flown at half-staff in honor of the victims.

"Orlando is a city where many Virgin Islanders reside. Many young Virgin Islanders are attending school and pursuing careers in the city, while many of our seniors have relocated there to gain full access to their Medicare benefits at assisted living facilities and in-home medical services," he said.

The governor said he has family who live and work in the Orlando and Central Florida areas. "The terrorist act today is affecting many Americans, including Virgin Islanders living in Orlando and our territory. Let us say a prayer for them in this most difficult and painful moment," he said.

But the governor did not address the slaughtering that has become a weekly occurrence in the territory he leads, which has a population of just over 100,000. The past two weekends in St. Thomas have been particularly bloody: Last week, a drive-by shooting [ended the lives of two young men](#), and seven days later, early Sunday, [another drive-by shooting](#) claimed the life of yet another young man and left a woman critically injured. Again on Sunday, at about 3:28 p.m., a 22-year-old was [gunned down](#) at a housing community.

Not even Police Commissioner Delroy Richards has addressed the issue, even as the homicide count in St. Thomas arrives at 20 this year alone, just halfway through 2016.

The governor skipped the local problem and instead urged residents to be vigilant and look for signs of suspicious activity, and immediately report them to authorities to help stall a similar event like the Orlando mass murder from happening here.

"As we work toward making the Virgin Islands a safer community, we must be mindful that tragedies such as this can occur anywhere in our nation, including our beautiful Virgin Islands. Each of us must take on a personal responsibility to speak up, say something and take action when we notice any potential danger. A silent witness against any crime is often the most dangerous ally that puts many of us in harms way. If you see something, say something," said the governor.

Mr. Mapp will be hosting a press conference in Government House here on Tuesday, where he will discuss the successes of his recent trade mission to China. It is not yet known if he will address the unrelenting crime issue at the press conference.