

The Virgin Islands Consortium

A New Police Force: Chief Winsbut McFarlande Says Changes Already Happening At St. Croix Police Department

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ST. CROIX -- Winsbut McFarlande, above, the new St. Croix police chief who replaced Arthur Hector [approximately two weeks ago](#), and who led the department for six months during the de Jongh administration, gathered reporters on Monday in a conference room at the police headquarters in Mars Hill to outline a new strategy.

His mission: Announce changes that he's already made and those yet to come but are currently being worked on in the St. Croix arm of the V.I.P.D. The chief also sought to woo the media, promising to be more open and approachable, a breakaway from

encounters media persons have had with some officers.

The new chief has been received well by a majority of the police officers here, and their morale has suddenly lifted, a development Chief McFarlande is banking on to implement the multiple changes he announced at the meeting.

Breezing over his history, the chief indicated that he was well suited to handle the job at hand, describing himself as a hands-on officer who visit hot spots and speak directly to the "players," warning that they should stop "terrorizing" the island, or face police action.

Mr. McFarlande said he changed leadership at the force's Investigation Bureau, replacing Detective Kenneth Edwards with Lieutenant Robert Matthews.

The chief described the Investigations Bureau as crucial to successful policing, as it deals with all felony cases. He said he needed someone in that role who "is more or less a go-getter; not somebody that's laid back. I want to be able to hold people accountable, so I felt that it was only important that I get somebody who is a go-getter." He said there are some officers who may be experiencing burnout because they have served in the same position for too long. Using Mr. Edwards as an example, Mr. McFarlande said the soon-to-retire detective has been on the force for over 30 years, and said that it was only plausible in light of Mr. Edwards' pending retirement that he phase-in Lt. Matthews.

Another important change is what the chief called proactive policing. "Too often we wait until something happens and then we want to try and fix it. My personal view is, if you know a dog bites, don't wait until it bites you to deal with it. [You should] try and avoid that bite," he said.

Mr. McFarlande said since being appointed chief, he has met with all commanders in the various zones on the island. The chief said he was careful not to force his agenda on officers, but in the same vein he relayed to them his vision of policing, and the role he expected the force to play in helping see its successful implementation.

"One of the things you're going to find now is that commanders and supervisors will be held accountable for their job," the chief said. He admitted that the force has a manpower problem, "But the manpower issue won't be used as an excuse not to get the job done. We have to be able to work with whatever we have to the best of our abilities to get what we need done."

All through the meeting, Chief McFarlande conveyed an unrelenting passion for his job and an urgent desire to see change on this island. His talk was a ray of hope for crime-fighting on St. Croix, as he spoke of multiple strategies he intends to use in crushing the criminal element.

Deployment, the chief said, will be done differently.

"What you will be seeing in reference to deployment is foot patrol in your towns," he said, referring to Christiansted and Frederiksted. "A directive went out the first week that I was here and it's something that's happening."

The V.I.P.D.'s K-9 Unit, which Mr. McFarlande said has not played an active role in day-to-day operations of policing, has changed. Now, all K-9 officers -- including six dogs and

8 personnel -- are assigned to various shifts. "That means you have K-9 available around the clock," he said. The unit is also tasked with foot patrol in the towns and on the Christiansted Boardwalk.

The chief also spoke of smart deployment, where he will be utilizing his limited staff in effective ways. Giving an example, he said if there is a Jump Up event happening in Christiansted, smart deployment would mean reassigning officers who are stationed in low-activity areas to the town where the event is taking place.

"I want to be able to use our resources the best way we possibly can [and] where it's needed. Too often officers use the excuse that there's no manpower," he said. Mr. McFarlande suggested that now more than ever, since he replaced Chief Hector, officers are coming back to work with uplifted spirits and in strong numbers.

"I had a commander tell me, 'For the past two weeks, I no longer need to have anybody stay over to work the other shift. My officers are responding. My officers are coming into work.' I don't what it is but people are somewhat more motivated than then," the chief said.

Chief McFarlande was at the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs for about a year until he was assigned to the V.I.P.D. following the [upsurge](#) in criminal activity here in 2015. His initiatives resulted in a calm in gun violence on this island, a major effort that included all peace officers and even military personnel.

The chief worked in both D.L.C.A. and the V.I.P.D. during the following months, until he was announced as the replacement of former Chief Hector, Sr. [on June 1.](#)