

The Virgin Islands Consortium

St. Croix Nightclubs Now Being Patrolled By V.I.P.D.; Clubs Must Shutdown By 3:30 A.M.

Entertainment / **Published On June 14, 2016 10:48 AM /**

Ernice Gilbert **June 14, 2016**



ST. CROIX -- Nightclubs on this island are now being patrolled by officers of the Virgin Islands Police Department, a move that the force hopes will diminish crime -- many of which occur after these establishments shut their doors.

That's according to new St. Croix Police Chief Winsbut Mcfarlande, who told reporters during a meeting held on Monday at the V.I.P.D.'s Mars Hill headquarters, that under his leadership, the force would implement new ways to battle violence.

"What I've been noticing is that a lot of our shooting incidents usually happen after a jam or a nightclub activity. These occur between 3:30 a.m. and 4:00 a.m.," the chief said. He

mentioned the incident that occurred [near a gas station across from Sunny Isle last month](#), where multiple individuals were involved in a shootout that left at least one person injured, although the victim did not report to the Juan F. Luis Hospital for medical attention.

"What I've been doing is talking to the nightclub owners. I'll be working close with the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs, reaching out to the business owners and having them close their doors at 3:30 a.m. The law says nightclubs stay open until 4:00 a.m., [but] it doesn't mean that four o'clock is when you stop the music and close the door. It means that [by] four o'clock everybody is out of the business," Chief McFarlande said.

He made known that he's had discussions with establishment owners such as Chris Hideaway, Aqua Lounge and Playa's Club -- "letting them know that when I send my officers there, my officers will say, 'Hey, it's 3:30, it's time to shut down.'" The chief said club employees should then turn on the lights to nudge clubgoers out, which will be followed by police protection for a period of time to ensure that violence does not breakout outside.

V.I.P.D. Commissioner Delroy Richards relayed the same information to this publication following the shooting near Sunny Isle last month.

"Let me tell you what my concern is. What we are seeing now is a trend. I know folks want to go out and have a good time, but it seems that after these nightclubs close, or are on the verge of closing, they take their little arguments from within and take it out into the streets, and it always occurs after three, four or five o'clock in the morning both here and in St. Thomas. We looked at our early-morning shootings and they occur right after they leave these clubs," Mr. Richards said.

Chief McFarlande said the initiative, so far, has been successful. "It's been working. It's worked for the last weekend and this weekend," he said.

The inventiveness is part of the chief's efforts to diminish criminal activity on this island. At the same [Monday meeting](#), he 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.