

The Virgin Islands Consortium

VIPD Updates 2016 Homicide Count To 47; On Current Track, It Could Be 60 By Year's End

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ST. CROIX -- The Virgin Islands Police Department has updated the 2016 homicide count to forty-seven, 40 of which were shooting/stabbing-related, while 7 were vehicular.

The information was provided upon request by the force's public information officer, Glen Dratte.

Of the 47 homicides, St. Croix has seen 22 so far, six of which were vehicular while 16 were from gun violence. The St. Thomas-St. John district leads with 25 homicides, with only one being vehicular, while the remaining 24 were gun and stabbing-related, according the information Mr. Dratte provided.

Excluding the vehicular homicides, when divided by months, the territory has seen 5 homicides every month this year. And if the trend continues, with four more months remaining in 2016, there would be 20 more homicides -- leading to a total of 60 gun-related homicides in one year.

Governor Kenneth Mapp in April [told The Consortium](#) that crime in the territory would get worse before results of his administration's initiatives could start manifesting.

"I've got a bit of bad news that, as governor, being honest with the community, I must share. The violence is going to be brought under control, but there is going to be more violence and there's going to be more homicides and more shootings before we arrest this problem because we have to catch up," Mr. Mapp said. "The government has to catch up with a lack of officers on the streets, the lack of law enforcement personnel. We have to catch up because we've done little in the past modernizing our department and resources. [We have to give] equipment and tools to our law enforcement personnel, we are behind in what we've done to train them. We are behind because our partnerships with our federal law enforcement partners prior to this administration was practically nonexistent. The ATF (Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms) was not even in the Virgin Islands. And none of what I'm saying is ascribing any blame to anyone; I'm just saying as governor, this is the raw reality."

The governor said his administration's efforts have caused change, "and as we bring these resources to the table, as we bring additional boots on the ground, as we infuse more equipment and resources to our police department, as we train and upgrade all levels of policing in the territory, that is when policing in the community will begin to see a different change in this outward violence that we see," he said.

Mr. Mapp went on to list the new abilities that he said would eventually come online once these initiatives take hold. "We will have the capacity to target, we will have the intelligence-gathering capability to take people down before they're able to commit many of these violent acts that we are seeing. We're going to have to ask the Senate to make some minor adjustments on the statute having to do with the possession of firearms so people that we know that are bringing in firearms legally [through] their luggage into the Virgin Islands, to deal with that issue just by a simple change to our local statutes."

"Until all of these realities are aligned, there's going to be outbursts of violence and there's going to be outbursts of shootings, and that's an unfortunate reality, but to be very candid, that is the reality," Mr. Mapp said.

"I want to be clear, I'm not saying to the Virgin Islands community that the government is doing nothing until all of these things have occurred, because the police commissioner, myself and the U.S. Attorney — we have been coming before the Virgin Islands community and updating you on the changes, infusions, partnerships and on the training."

"But in fifteen months we're not going to go from outward massive violent shootings in the community to none. And so we hope to see less of it, but I'm going to tell you we're going to see more as we go into the future, until we get ourselves completely retrofitted, positioned and resourced that we can really bring this problem to a screeching halt and only have exceptions rather than the normal course of action."

Feature Image: VIPD Officers collecting evidence following a shooting homicide in Frederiksted, in October 2015. (Credit: VIC)

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