

The Virgin Islands Consortium

D.O.J., V.I.P.D, Team Up To Fight White Collar Crime; D.O.J. Hires Crime Director

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ST. THOMAS -- Attorney General Claude Earl Walker has announced that the Department of Justice is putting resources into tackling public corruption, white collar crimes and fraud-related crimes.

"We're not just focusing on solving homicides and some of the other serious crimes," Mr. Walker said. "We also intend to deal with this issue of fraud and public corruption."

Mr. Walker made these remarks during a joint press conference with Virgin Islands Police Department Commissioner Delroy Richards, Sr., held Friday morning at Government House here to inform the public of an initiative between both departments to arrest

economic crimes – the establishment of an Economics Crime Bureau.

“Governor Mapp has made it clear that this type of conduct must stop in the Territory and the Commissioner and I are dedicated to doing this,” Mr. Walker said. “That’s why we have conducted this initiative. It’s unfortunate to have to inform you that this is only the beginning; we have cases that we’re actively working on right now that we will make known to you in the near future involving similar conduct, involving public corruption.”

Mr. Walker said there has been an increase in incidences of fraud and a number of elderly persons are the victims. ’

“We have other cases involving fraud – persons going into someone’s account and withdrawing money without permission,” Mr. Walker said. “A number of these cases involve the elderly and typically we find that someone who’s close to the elderly person or senior citizen as a caregiver or a family member who has access to the senior’s account and is negotiating social security payment or having access to those funds is misusing those funds.”

Mr. Walker said the DOJ will “aggressively investigate the cases with the police department and prosecute” persons who are suspected of engaging in fraudulent activity. The hiring of a director of white collar crime is one strategy the Attorney General’s office has employed to vigorously fight such crimes.

“The Legislature considers white collar crime and public corruption very seriously to the point that it created this office within the Attorney General’s office and we conducted a national search for a director and we have found a director who works closely with the police department to investigate this category of crime and is totally fixed on working on those issues and not anything else,” Mr. Walker said.

Assistant Attorney General John Tolud, who was recently chosen to head the white collar crime division, has already become fully involved in fighting white collar crime within the Territory.

“We have several ongoing active investigations and we’re putting forth the full resources of the office to resolve the existing cases or we’re taking them to trial,” Mr. Tolud said. “The AG and I want to send a message that these types of crimes can no longer be tolerated and that the government and the people of the Territory can no longer afford these crimes and the negative impact that they have on daily lives.”

In his prepared statement, Mr. Richards extolled the “joint effort” of the VIPD’s Economics Crimes Bureau, formed in 2015, and the DOJ, which resulted in the arrest of several people on St. Croix.

“The Bureau has functioned well within the last year and a half, it’s done its job and as a result of the bureau’s initiatives, several arrests were made on the island of St. Croix,” Mr. Richards said. “The investigations were long; there were certain consultations that were done with the Department of Justice. Affidavits were prepared or reviewed by the Justice Department, so it was a joint effort. As a result of the investigations and affidavits, warrants were issued and I must announce that this week on Tuesday, Nov. 1, the Virgin Islands Police Economics Crime Unit executed four arrest warrants issued by a Superior Court judge.”

He added that there are similar initiatives being conducted on St. Thomas and similar arrests will be forthcoming.

Police are also on the hunt for Rosa Diaz, a 55-year-old Hispanic woman who is wanted for forgery. She is described as weighing 150 pounds and being 5' 4" tall. She has black hair, brown eyes and a brown complexion, according to Mr. Richards.

Mr. Richards vowed that "the Economics Crime Unit, working in conjunction with the Department of Justice, will remain focused and will remain relentless in its pursuit of identifying and bringing to justice those individuals who continue to prey on unsuspecting folks in the Territory, to include our elderly."

Feature Image: From left to right: V.I.P.D. Commissioner Delroy Richards and Attorney General Claude Walker.