

The Virgin Islands Consortium

After Slaying Of Baby, V.I.P.D. Pleads With Community To Come Forward With Information

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ST. THOMAS -- At a press briefing held at the Alexander Farrelly Justice Complex here this afternoon, V.I.P.D. officials, along with a clergyman representing a group of ministries here, decried the [tragic killing](#) of a 1-year-old girl child, who was shot in her left chest and was pronounced dead at 10:50 p.m. on Wednesday, following the incident that occurred in the vicinity of Contant Knolls.

The unfortunate and upsetting incident sent a shiver through the Virgin Islands, as residents and diasporas spoke out against violence, and called for a change in direction from those in authority, as well as community members who may know of crime perpetrators -- urging them to speak out.

After offering condolences to the families of last night's shooting victims, Assistant Police Commissioner Curtis Griffin said, "There will be action taken on the part of the [Police Department] to deal with these senseless crimes." He said the force could not be everywhere at all times, but it would do its utmost best to reduce the violence.

St. Thomas Police Chief Jason Marsh joined Mr. Griffin in offering the victims' families condolences, and lamented that a 17-month-old child had died during the shooting. He guaranteed the public that the force would follow every lead until justice is served. From there, Chief Marsh reached out to the community, stating that perpetrators of crime have committed the crimes being committed.



From left to right: Jason Marsh, Curtis Griffin

and Samuel Weekes. (Credit: V.I.P.D.)

"We need the community to come out and assist us in these investigations. Again, an infant, a child -- now, we have another grieving mother because of senseless acts of violence," Chief Marsh mourned. He urged residents who are weary of contacting the V.I.P.D. with information to at least share with the anonymous tips line, Crime Stoppers USVI, [where one's tip could lead to a payday worth multiple thousands of dollars](#).

"Give us the information that we need so we could put this people behind bars, because we need your help to link whatever evidence we may have," Chief Marsh said. "I'm pleading with the community to come forward and step up, and let's put an end to this senseless violence." The chief said that a majority of the violent crimes were being perpetrated by a small group of individuals.

And he revealed that police were following all leads, but would not give specifics, careful not to jeopardize operations ongoing. Chief Marsh also clarified that only the driver and baby were shot during yesterday's incident.

In a sign that it intends to reach out to religious organizations to help battle the crime problem, the V.I.P.D. invited Virgin Islands Clergy Peace Coalition Pastor, Samuel Weekes, who spoke forcefully against the violence and committed support to the police force. The group includes a coalition of 9 pastors in the St. Thomas-St. John district, Mr. Weekes said, with each pastor representing a different denomination. The group's vision is to reduce the loss of life from gun violence in the Virgin Islands.

Revealing that the mother of the baby who died attends the church that he pastors, Mr. Weekes said church members' hearts were filled with sorrow. The pastor also expressed outrage at the incident, resenting the idea that even children were now in the crosshairs of gunfire. The pastor, joining Mr. Griffin and Chief Marsh, called on residents to share

what they know.

"We are committing to using every tool at our disposal to assist in reducing gun violence in our territory; this is our territory," Mr. Weekes said. "This is our land, we have to put a stop to this. We cannot rely on V.I.P.D. alone." The pastor did not share what strategy the coalition would employ to help combat the violence, but he mentioned a number of nonprofit organizations that the coalition intends to engage for collaboration.

"We kindly ask the Virgin Islands community not to let this child short life go in vain," Mr. Weeks said. "Let us work together -- this is not a time to hide behind the window."

Governor Kenneth Mapp [forcefully condemned](#) the incident earlier today, and authorized a \$10,000 reward for anyone who would come forward with information.

"The harder we work to curtail these violent acts, the more brutal they become, which is so shocking to the conscience of people of good will," Mr. Mapp said. "I am asking my police commissioner, the attorney general and their federal law enforcement colleagues to aggressively step up their initiatives and focus on those persons in the territory known for their involvement in criminal activity, gun and drug possession.

"I want the law enforcement community to do whatever it takes to bring the perpetrator of this senseless act of violence to justice. I am authorizing a \$10,000 reward to any person who provides meaningful information that will lead to the arrest and conviction of the person or persons responsible for the death of this infant."

Feature Image: Jason Marsh, courtesy VIPD.