

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Shootings, Attempted Rape, Carjacking And Assault Affect USVI This Week

Crime / **Published On March 03, 2017 10:37 PM /**

Ernice Gilbert **March 03, 2017**



Multiple criminal acts have affected the territory in recent days, following the V.I.P.D.'s deep cut in overtime hours for police officers. Police Commissioner Delroy Richards told this publication that the reduction in overtime would not affect the force's ability to protect residents, but there has been talk of low morale at the V.I.P.D. since the hours were shaved, which could hamper police performance.

V.I.P.D. Public Information Officer, Glen Dratte, and V.I.P.D. Media Specialist, Sakeeda Freeman, both reported multiple criminal acts that affecting both districts mere days following the implementation of the overtime reduction.

On Wednesday at about 11:23 p.m., the 911 emergency call center dispatched officers to Mount Pleasant, St. Croix, to investigate an assault.

Upon arrival, officers met with the female victim, who stated that while traveling to her friend's home, she noticed that a vehicle trailed her to the location. She said two masked men then came out the vehicle they were trailing her in, manhandled her out the car and threatened her at gunpoint. They also assaulted the victim and stole her car.

In a separate incident on Thursday at about 6:27 a.m., officers were dispatched to the vicinity of Mount Pleasant West to investigate discharging of shots.

Upon officers' arrival, contact was made with a female who stated that she was awoken to loud noises believed to be gunshots. The female said her boyfriend called her minutes later to relay the news that two men dressed in all black, came out the bushes across the street and fired multiple gunshots.

The victim later told police that he was out warming the engine of his car, as well as to feed his dog, and that while driving off the men shot at him.

The victim said he realized that he was shot and drove himself to the hospital.

Meanwhile in St. Thomas, on Wednesday at about 10:22 p.m., a female victim came to the Richard Callwood Command and reported that while jogging in the area of the Pump House on Veterans Drive, an unknown black male grabbed her.

According to the victim, the aggressor threw her on the ground then placed his body on her and tried to remove her jogging clothes. But she fought back by grabbing a stone and striking the suspect on his head. The suspect then released the victim, who then escaped in a western direction. She did not, however, see where the suspect fled.

Elsewhere in St. Thomas, on Thursday at about 7:45 p.m., the 911 emergency call center received a call in reference to a robbery in the area of Foot Hills, which is located at Sugar Estate.

Officers traveled to the location and made contact with a male victim, who told police that he was walking in the area when an unknown male pushed him on the ground. The victim said the male suspect then took his money and his jewelry from him.

The victim was later treated at the Roy Lester Schneider Hospital (RLSH) after complaining of pain in his hips.

In yet another incident in St. Thomas on Wednesday, patrol officers made contact with an assault victim at RLSH, who stated that he was at Double Play Bar in Kronprindsens Gade, when a Hispanic male grabbed him and struck him numerous times to his head with a beer bottle.

Patrons at the bar were able to pull the suspect off of the victim, who then fled the area for his safety. However, the Hispanic male, who was joined by his girlfriend wielding a knife, pursued the victim, but their chase was futile as the victim managed to run into Jala Jala Nightclub to dodge his pursuers.

The victim was treated for injuries behind his ear at the hospital. Police did not say what time the incident occurred, nor which ear the victim was injured in.

Finally, Criminal Investigation Bureau officers on Thursday at about 11:49 p.m. responded to a shooting in Estate Thomas, in the area of First Stop Gas Station, in St. Thomas.

Upon arrival to the scene, police found a black male who had been shot, lying in the street next to a wall in the vicinity of Oswald Harris Court. The male was shot by a suspect in a dark SUV, who drove near and fired several shots at the individuals who were sitting on the wall.

The victim was transported via ambulance to the Roy Lester Schneider Hospital's emergency room for treatment.

All these incidents were reported by the V.I.P.D. beginning Wednesday.

It's not certain that the spike in criminal activity correlates with the recent reduction in overtime. Mr. Richards said recently that the efforts to cut cost at the V.I.P.D. would not affect operations, as all actions, moving forward, must be justified. Giving an example, he said, "If we need to have 10 police officers on the street, and it requires that overtime be paid for those 10 police officers, all I'm saying is that we must be able to justify the payment to 10 officers based on our deployment strategy. We're not just simply going to say, 'okay, 10 officers are on the streets and we don't know what kind of overtime they're making.'"

He said the force would ensure that adequate coverage remains a priority to deter criminal acts. "But we must be able to justify the monies that we're spending and the payments that we're making in overtime. That's all I'm saying. We must be held accountable with the monies that we spend and pay."

"I know you're hearing folks saying saying, 'well, I have a lot of expenses, I have a high mortgage,' or 'I have this to pay and I have that to pay.' But you can't budget on overtime because overtime is not a guarantee; overtime is based on need," Mr. Richards stressed. "Don't give me that excuse that because it is cut, that you're going have officers life at stake or the community's safety being compromised, because that is far from the truth," Mr. Richards concluded.