

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Crime Stoppers Offering Over \$40,000 Reward For Info Leading To Arrest Of Weekend Rape Suspect Or Suspects

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ST. CROIX -- Crime Stoppers USVI, [during a press conference](#) called by the V.I.P.D. today to give the territory a status update on [Saturday night's rape incident](#), announced that the anonymous tips service is offering over \$40,000 to anyone who provides information leading to the arrest the suspect or suspects involved in rape.

"With the plea for call to action, the community of St. Croix has raised over \$40,000 to be paid as a reward for information leading to the arrest of the individual, or individuals responsible for this heinous act," said Laurie Dunton, chair of Crime Stoppers USVI. She

went on to thank the St. Croix community for banding together to donate such a strong amount in an effort to see justice done.

Ms. Dunton also announced a \$10,000 reward for information leading to the apprehension of suspects involved in rape incidents [that have plagued the east end of St. Thomas for several months](#).

"I don't stand here today as one person or one voice. I stand with law enforcement, I stand with parents, I stand with students, I stand with teachers, I stand with priests, I stand with pastors, I stand with mothers and fathers. We will not stop, we will not pause, we will not be silenced, we will not be intimidated, and we will not allow you to continue to prey on our children, our women and our men that call the Virgin Islands home," Ms. Dunton warned.

She urged anyone -- including organizations -- who wants to donate to either of the aforementioned funds, or directly to Crime Stoppers, to do so by visiting [Crime Stoppers USVI](#). Persons who want to provide information -- whether they believe it's insignificant -- should go [here](#) to submit the tip.

The [incident occurred on the East End Road](#), with reports pinning the location anywhere between Tide Village or near Divi. Two females were driving when suddenly a white double cab truck rear-ended them, prompting the victims to stop the vehicle. One female stepped out of the vehicle and was taken by the three assailants elsewhere and raped. She was later dropped off near Limetree Bay Terminals, formerly the HOVENSA Refinery. The second victim managed to escape.

Following the crime, the commissioner — in a brief interview with The Consortium late Monday — [urged St. Croix residents to be vigilant](#), warning that three male suspects were still on the loose.

Mr. Richards said he's aim was not to panic the community, but the warning, he said, was warranted in light of the circumstances.

"I just want to warn individuals that you have three guys out there who committed an act, and until we are able to take them into custody, I want everyone to be as vigilant as possible, be very careful. I don't want to instill outright panic, but I want people to be aware that these guys are out there and like I said, until we take them into custody, I want residents to take all the precautions necessary," Mr. Richards said.

The commissioner revealed during the press conference this morning that the V.I.P.D. had located the vehicle allegedly used to perpetrate the crime. The announcement represents a major breakthrough in the case, with Mr. Richards expressing confidence that the force would be successful in its pursuit of bringing the criminals to justice.

"We are not going to leave any stone unturned; if you're out there and you're hearing my voice, I suggest you turn yourself in," Mr. Richards warned, aiming his ultimatum to the still at-large criminals. "We're going to find you and we're going to bring you in."

The commissioner said the incident had touched him personally. "We're talking about two young ladies in the prime of their lives, who did nothing wrong, they were viciously accosted and sexually assaulted," Mr. Richards said, expressing sentiments he relayed

to The Consortium on Monday night, following a V.I.P.D. release informing the community about the crime.

"We're going to pursue, and we're going to apprehend those perpetrators that were involved in this particular case," he said.

The commissioner revealed that he sought both technical and investigatory help from the Federal Bureau of Investigations, and confirmed that the bureau has joined forces with the V.I.P.D. "This is now a joint investigation between the local police department and our federal partners," he said.

Chief Investigator on the case, Naomi Joseph, revealed that three black male were identified as suspects, with their ages ranging from 20s to early 30s. One of the suspects used a handgun during the crime to accost the rape victim, according to police. The handgun was not discharged, however.

DNA samples were collected on the rape victim, but Det. Joseph said the V.I.P.D. was working to collect as much evidence as possible before sending the kit out for results.

The community has "overwhelmingly" provided the V.I.P.D. with information, Mr. Richards said, stating that residents have been calling on a daily basis to relay details -- some of which include vehicles fitting the description of the truck used in the crime.

As for the truck, Mr. Richards said it was reported stolen. Asked whether it was reported stolen by its owner, the commissioner said the situation is thorny.

"It gets complicated, so I would prefer to just simply say that the vehicle was reported stolen. We know who the owner is, we've spoken to the owner, so like I said, the investigation in this matter will continue," Mr. Richards said.

Asked whether there was an uptick in crime in the territory, or whether it was simply a case of more coverage, Mr. Richards said he believed crime incidents have become more public than ever because of more news coverage -- a new reality he said he has no problem with. "Crime in general has been more public than ever because of just that. I think it's being reported more and I don't have an issue with that. I think people need know. People need to know the facts and if we keep folks in the dark, they're going to assume. So I believe in reporting all incidents so that the public can know what's going on," Mr. Richards said.

The case will see the involvement of federal officers [who were recently given peace officer status in the territory](#), Mr. Richards confirmed. But he said the V.I.P.D. has always sought the aid of its federal partners, suggesting that this case was not unique in that regard.

"I think the objective of this police department and the various federal partners, is to bring this case to closure, and I would use whatever resources that's to my fingertips to reach that goal," Mr. Richards said.

The commissioner said rumors making the rounds on social media about a similar incident that ostensibly occurred in Sunny Isle, were not true.

