

The Virgin Islands Consortium

V.I.P.D. Conducting Three Separate Investigations Into Shooting Incident That Left Detective Wounded By Friendly Fire

Crime / **Published On May 27, 2017 11:19 AM /**

Ernice Gilbert **May 27, 2017**



ST. CROIX -- A [friendly fire incident on Thursday night](#) that ended with Detective Moses President being injured by gunfire from another police officer while responding to a brandishing of weapon occurrence at the Frontline Bar in Calquhoun, is being investigated by three separate arms within the V.I.P.D., Police Commissioner Delroy Richards told The Consortium this morning.

The commissioner said the investigation is part of normal protocol, and its results will be forwarded to consent decree monitors for their evaluation.

"It's nothing new. Since [we are under a consent decree](#), when we have a level 1 use of force, we have a trained team of individuals called the Force Investigation Team, they will automatically be dispatched to [investigate]," Mr. Richards said, explaining level 1 use of force to be any incident that includes shots being fired or when someone gets seriously injured.

Under the consent decree, which was levied against the V.I.P.D. by the federal government in 2008 following a case the feds brought against the Government of the Virgin Islands, the V.I.P.D. is required to detail all incidents and provide the information to an outside independent monitor. Thursday's friendly fire incident is no exception, with this particular incident calling for three levels of investigation.

Force Investigation Team members authorized to investigate the matter under the level 1 protocol are equally spread between the St. Croix and St. Thomas districts, Mr. Richards said. He said because members of the team must come together to conduct the investigation, St. Thomas team members were flown to St. Croix, "to begin evaluating the circumstances around the shooting," Mr. Richards said.

Then there's another investigation being conducted by the Criminal Investigation Bureau, whose members Mr. Richards made known will seek to determine whether or not a crime was committed by any of the police officers involved in Thursday's friendly fire incident.

And the Internal Affairs Unit, Mr. Richards added, is conducting its own investigation. Its duty will be to look for policy violations.

"The Criminal Investigation Bureau has nothing to do with policy, they're looking at criminal law; the Internal Affairs investigation is administrative -- whether or not any of the administrative rules were violated," Mr. Richards explained, adding that all three investigations are conducted simultaneously.

"It isn't like we're doing this for the first time; we've done it before in all the other officer shootings we've had," the commissioner said, adding that the investigations must be done right away.

Once the reports are completed, they are then forwarded to the U.S. Department of Justice, as well as the consent decree independent monitor.

The commissioner said it was likely that the three separate arms conducting the investigations would have varying conclusions, although they may not necessarily contradict each other. "You'll have one looking at it from a criminal angle, one from an internal policy angle and then you have the last one determining whether or not the level of force used was justified," Mr. Richards said, adding that under the consent decree, a level 4 use of force, which is simply the act of handcuffing, requires investigation.

"That's how rigid it is," Mr. Richards said, referring to the consent decree. "You handcuff someone and you better have the necessary justification of reports to support it under the consent decree. A lot of people need to understand that it's no longer the V.I.P.D. in the past, we're under so much scrutiny that everything we do is under review. We have to go to court quarterly under the consent decree and there's a lot we have to justify," he said.

Asked what prompted the on-duty officer to discharge his firearm, Mr. Richards said he would not comment on the matter because the investigation is underway. "I can't jump to any conclusions. We know that shots were fired initially when the other officer got on the scene; we don't know what prompted the officer to do that. Whether or not the person is mistaken, normally that's the case... [but] it's a lot of stuff you have to look at before we can determine how it happened and why."

Mr. Richards said the condition of Det. President as well as the suspect involved had improved.

According to information provided by the force's public information officer, Glen Dratte, Det. President had responded to a 911 emergency call center notification regarding a man brandishing a firearm at the Frontline Bar in Calquhoun at about 11:30 p.m., and had notified 911 that he was responding to the incident.

Upon the officer's arrival, contact was made with the suspect, who was told by Det. President to drop his weapon. However, instead of surrendering, the suspect pointed his gun at Det. President, causing the officer to discharge his firearm.

The suspect sustained multiple gunshot wounds about his body.

Following the exchange between Det. President and the suspect, an on-duty officer -- whose identity Mr. Richards said he would not reveal -- arrived on the scene, reportedly unaware of Det. President's presence, according to Mr. Dratte, and began firing shots, wounding Det. President in the hip area.

Feature Image: Frontline Bar, Calquhoun. (Credit: VIC)