

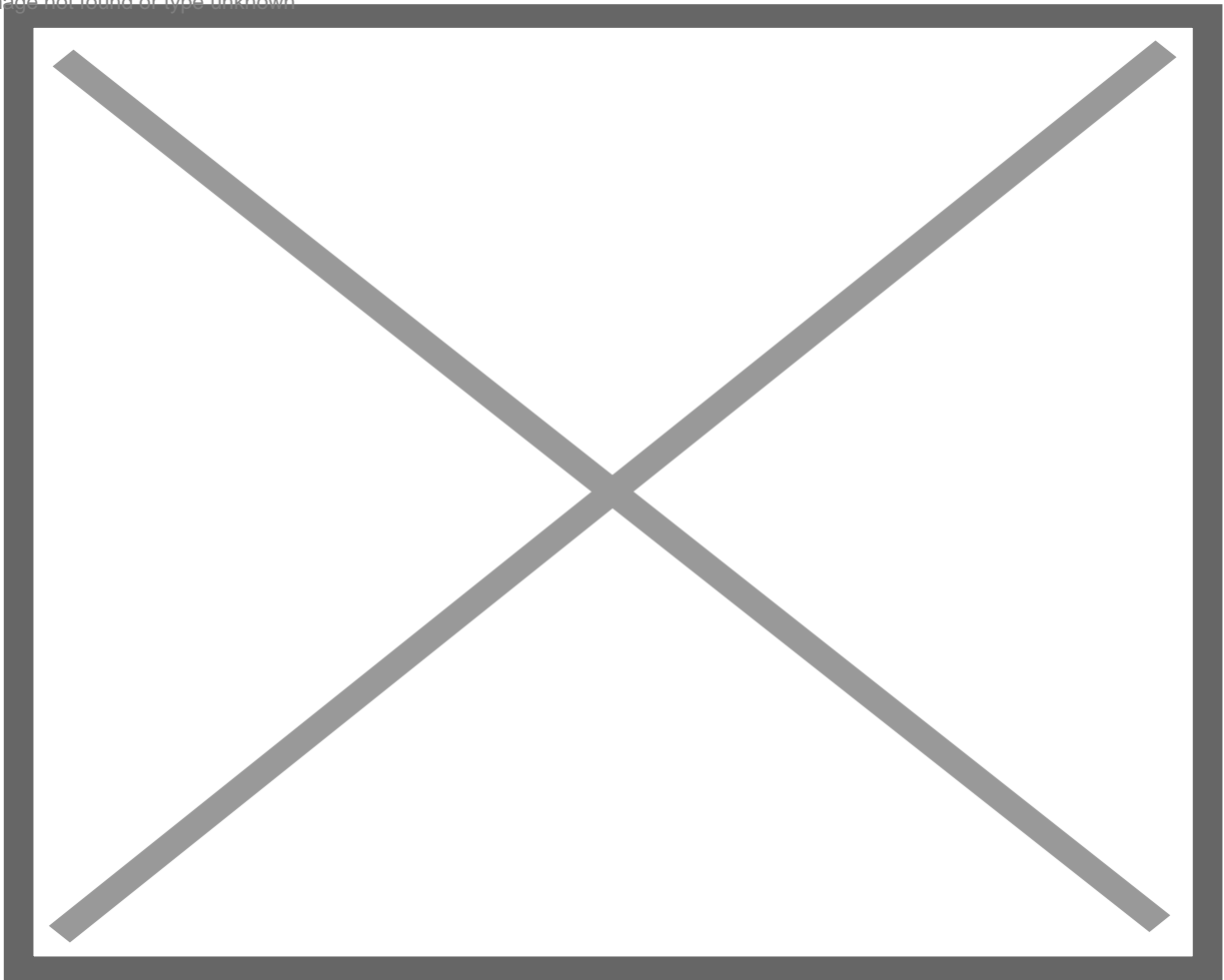
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Members of a Grove Group are at War With Each Other, Police Say; Mobile Command Office to be Setup in Grove

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ST. CROIX — A group in Grove Place that appeared united at one point has splintered into factions and are at war with each other, leading to the deadly shootings on St. Croix Friday that resulted in the death of two young men — one [at HH Tire & Battery](#) during the morning time and the other [in Lorraine Village](#) in Grove.

That's according to St. Croix Police Chief Sidney Elskoe, who spoke during a press briefing via Zoom held on Saturday afternoon. There, Chief Elskoe, Police Commissioner Trevor Velinor and other law enforcement officials provided an update on the crime situation and police efforts in combating the violence.

Chief Elskoe spoke of two incidents leading up to the killings on Friday, which he said appear to be connected according to police investigations. He spoke of an incident that occurred on Thursday, July 23 at the Louis E. Brown Housing Community, where a man identified as 28-year-old Jonathan Fontanelle was [shot and killed](#). Then on the same day at about 10:25 p.m., the 911 Emergency Call Center received reports of shots fired in the Upper Love area. Upon officers' arrival to the scene, they discovered that a man who was under house arrest for a murder had been shot. As a result of his injuries he had to be airlifted for treatment.

Chief Elskoe then spoke of the Friday shootings at HH Tire & Battery and Lorraine Village, stating, "Based on the information garnered through our investigations, all of these incidents are connected or seem to be connected. It appears that there is a group established in Grove Place which is now splintered and the members of that group are currently at war. We are pleading with the public, if you have any information please contact us." The chief said persons with information should contact 911 or leave an anonymous message through Crime Stoppers USVI [here](#).

The chief also said that federal law enforcement officers are working with the V.I.P.D. to dismantle the group.

The media was unable to ask questions because the V.I.P.D. said it did not have enough time to accommodate a call-in line. Nonetheless, in a question following the event to Police Commissioner Velinor, the Consortium sought answers on strategies the V.I.P.D. was utilizing to combat the violence.

"We are deploying more enforcement resources into the affected areas. Individuals coming in and out of the area should expect police contacts," Mr. Velinor said. "We will have officers on foot patrol and our mobile command office will be stationed in the community. Any information or lead provided will be followed up."

During the briefing, Mr. Velinor decried the violence. "There's a challenge here with our youth population and our young male population that they are engaging in activities that are unbecoming, irresponsible, utilizing firearms in ways to settle their disputes as opposed to just having a conversation and being able to talk and laugh on another day."

He added, "I don't want to trivialize this; I know that it's much bigger than simply an argument, but we the Virgin Islands Police Department, we're counting on our community to help us through this process."

"I am taken aback that we've seen some of the videos and commentaries on individuals and they have no place in a civilized community, and so it's really disheartening to see some of the things that we've seen recently," the commissioner said.

Mr. Velinor went on to state, "The carnage has to stop. We're going to continue to investigate and we're going to hold those who have committed such heinous acts accountable, while being responsible in terms of how we police. And we're going to bring as much resources as we possibly can to address the issues at hand."