

The Virgin Islands Consortium

VIPD Has Yet To Make An Arrest As New Video Of Sunday Night Shooting Emerges

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ST. CROIX -- The Virgin Islands Police Department as of late Wednesday had no suspect in custody in connection with the Sunday night shooting that left 6 people shot during the Floatopia event at Fort Frederik Beach.

V.I.P.D. Public Information Officer Glen Dratte told The Consortium that no one had been arrested. However, the V.I.P.D. was continuing its investigation into the matter, he said.

The shooting rocked the territory and left many who attended the beach party traumatized. V.I.P.D. Commissioner Nominee Trevor Velinor said along with the injured -- among them a fireman who had to be airlifted to the U.S. mainland for further medical attention -- some event-goers were trampled upon as the dense crowd of shaken people tried to run to safety.

Residents have been awaiting updates on the investigation's status; Mr. Dratte said early Monday that information of motive and simple victim details such as sex and injuries sustained would be forthcoming.

Meanwhile, The Consortium has obtained a video showing a new angle as the shooting broke out. Multiple gunshots are heard rattling the night as frightened individuals hustle for cover. Adam O., a local Soca artist, was performing when the first set of shots rang out. A young lady who was dancing, along with those watching, dashed for cover. People started stumbling upon each other as chaos ensued. Loud screams are heard as additional shots were fired.

During a Monday press conference to address the shootings, Governor Albert Bryan called on the community to share information that could lead to the arrest of perpetrators. He said community members know who the criminals are. "It's about high time that we do something about it because this was a crime against our community," Mr. Bryan said.

The territory's leader said while the U.S. Virgin Islands isn't the only jurisdiction with gun violence, "We are a community that has not really taken a strong stance and do something about it."

He spoke about loopholes in the territory's permitting system that he suggested make it easier for perpetrators to commit their criminal acts. "I think it's incumbent upon us and the Legislature to come together and have a permitting system that calls for events having 300-400 people, to have a permit that is signed off for by the chief of police for that district," Mr. Bryan said. That way, law enforcement could make verifications that demand safety, he explained.

"Violence can happen anywhere, but we have a responsibility to look to see how we can mitigate it, because the number 1 job of our law enforcement is to keep Virgin Islanders and the people that come here safe," Mr. Bryan went on.

The governor said initiatives such as random stops have been ongoing and have yielded results. And aside from permitting loopholes, he pointed to other weak points in local law that he said allow violent offenders an easy pass. Giving an example, Mr. Bryan mentioned the territory's arrest laws, which he said provide mandatory bail for individuals involved in shootings, except for murder and other extreme crimes.

"This allows for more violence, retaliations, more shootings to go on in our community. We must have a system that allows for us to take people off the streets and curtail further retaliation and further shooting," he said.

Another way to help battle crime, Mr. Bryan said, is to put cameras at key locations. He used the Christiansted town as an example, stating that ever since the cameras were installed, crime has decreased drastically.

With employers from a variety of industries looking for people to work, Mr. Bryan said, "This random violence cannot be excused as anything but a wanton disregard for the public safety of Virgin Islands residents, and a wanton disregard for the law."

In closing, the governor said, "To any of you who may be listening out there, street code is for street man. Community code is when we get involved. Innocent people are being shot. This thing about not ratting, that's from street man to street man. This is us protecting our community; call and tell people what you know because this is about you and I walking on the streets. It's about your mom, it's about your kids getting a stray bullet. It's spilling over into all of us so we can't allow people to be warring on turfs by themselves. They've involved us now, so it's time for us to take back our community."

Shooting at Floatopia

What was otherwise a fun-filled day in Frederiksted at the popular "Floatopia" beach event on Sunday, came to an abrupt end when gunfire erupted in a dense crowd during the nighttime, sending a mass of people running for their lives as the gunmen made their way from the event to the streets, shooting through the throngs and injuring innocent individuals who attended the summer beach party.

According to Mr. Dratte, six individuals, including female victims and possibly a minor between 16-17 years old, were injured as a result of the shootout. He said all victims were transported to the Juan F. Luis Hospital for medical treatment by private vehicles.

The call came in to the 911 emergency call center at about 9:25 p.m. According to Mr. Dratte, "an undisclosed amount of gunshots were discharged from multiple directions," creating chaos and extreme fear.

The shootout could not have happened at a worse time. The Fort Frederik Beach where the gun battle occurred and the nearby road had so many people that, before the shooting, it took 20 minutes by vehicle to travel a distance that usually takes seconds. And the event was one of the best attended affairs this summer, with a mixture of teens, young adults and middle-aged individuals enjoying themselves. Floatopia had children, too. However, it was unclear as to whether parents with children were still at the beach when the incident broke out.

But as the Sunday occasion neared its end, the shooting broke out from behind the bar area. Then, the gunmen continued shooting — seemingly unbothered by the hundreds of individuals both young and old running frantically for cover — from the event location to the main road, injuring several individuals.

The Consortium had visited what was arguably one of the best attended events all summer to speak with event planner Chad Pringle to write about Floatopia's success over the years. Yesterday's effort had a variety of fun activities, including an inflatable foam pit, games and several performances from local artists and deejays. It was the first time that a shooting had occurred at Floatopia, and there was not much the organizer could have done to prevent such an incident at a beach that's open to all, where crowds are hard to control. Several police officers were on location for the duration of the event.

Mr. Dratte said while most of the victims' wounds were not life-threatening, one individual who was shot in the shoulder is scheduled to be airlifted to the U.S. mainland for further

medical attention today.

Heavy security at the Juan F. Luis Hospital

The Juan F. Luis Hospital had several heavily armed police officers with automatic rifles protecting the medical facility, according to people who were at the hospital for purposes unrelated to the shooting.

The frantic scene at the hospital's emergency room caused alarm, too, as individuals injured from the shooting were rushed into the ER, straining the hospital's limited resources. As of May, J.F.L. only had [one functioning operating room](#).