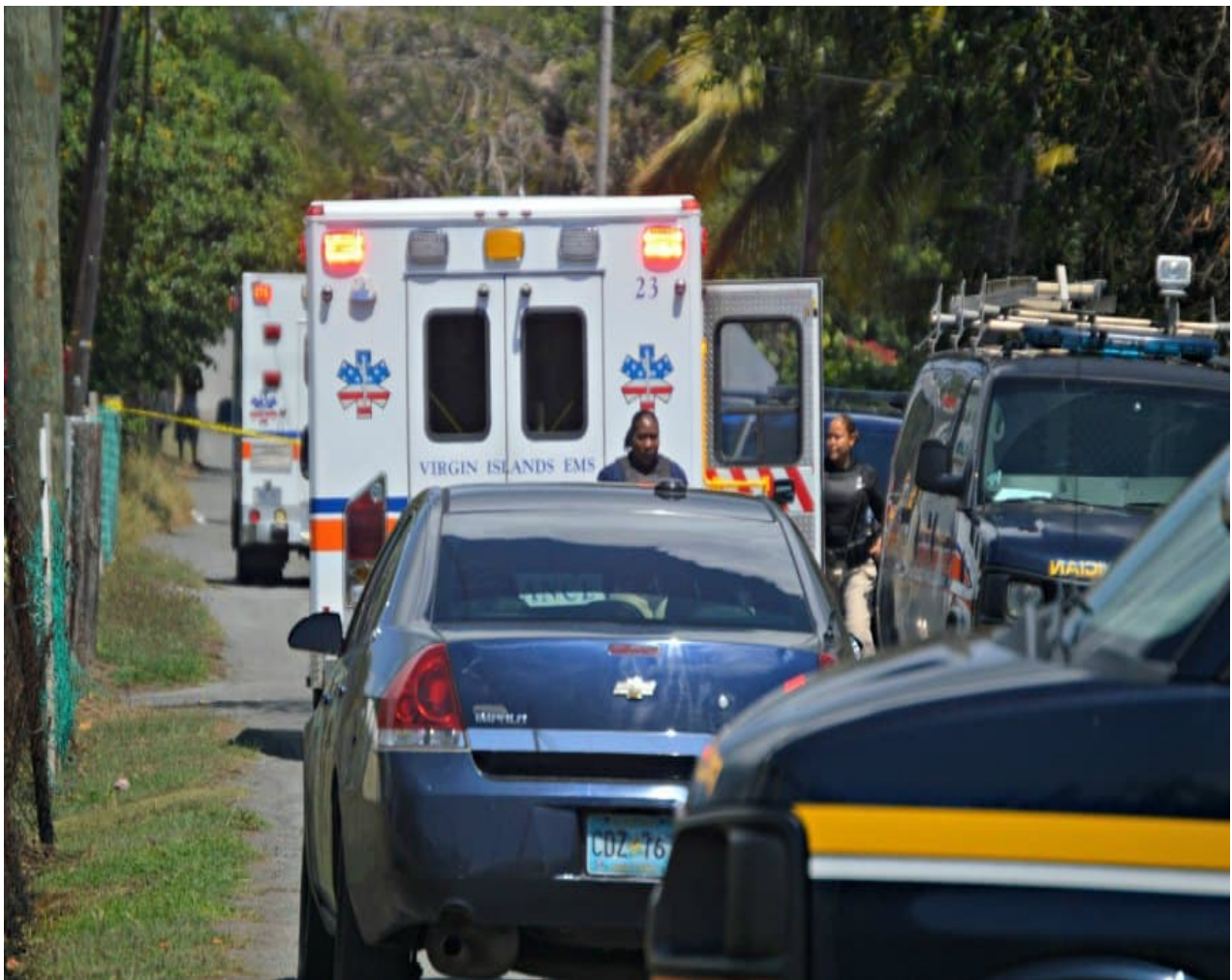


The Virgin Islands Consortium

USVI is 'Under Siege,' Says St. Croix Police Chief As VIPD Pleads With Community for Help

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The V.I.P.D. made a passionate plea to community members Monday to provide information that could bring criminals to justice, with St. Croix Police Chief Sidney Elskoe and Police Commissioner Trevor Velinor leading the charge.

"We are under siege... There is only a small portion of the community that is holding us hostage. I beg of you, I plead to please turn these people in. Saying nothing is not an option; you have to choose a side," Chief Elskoe said.

Mr. Velinor commented, "What we need to do literally is change the narrative, change the culture of acceptance of these types of behavior."

The fervent call for community support follows [two homicides over the weekend](#) on St. Croix, which carried the USVI total for 2020 to 45. On Saturday night after 8:00 p.m., 19-year-old Nathaniel Felix was shot in the vicinity of his residence in Concordia West during a drive-by shooting. He was transported to the Juan F. Luis Hospital & Medical Center, where he later succumbed to his injuries. The following day Bomani Christian of Catherine's Hope on the East End of St. Croix was shot and killed at his residence in the presence of his children.

Asked about data on arrests made for homicide cases, Mr. Velinor said the VIPD to date arrested 20 individuals on homicide-related charges, 10 from St. Croix and 10 from St. Thomas. He added that out of the 20 individuals arrested, 14 were related explicitly to the homicides. Additionally the V.I.P.D. has seized 142 firearms off of the territory's streets through September 30.

Moreover, the police force has partnered with the VI Port Authority and the Department of Tourism to introduce a firearms substation at both the Cyril E. King and the Henry E. Rohlsen airports.

"Our experience confirms that firearms are secreted within luggage and then brought into the territory, ending up on our streets to commit acts of violence," Mr. Velinor said. "VIPD will continue to work with U.S. Customs and Border Patrol, ATF, and other federal agencies to interdict these firearms before they can get on our streets." The substations are expected to open soon.

"We've gone to too many funerals, we've seen too many individuals essentially sentenced to death by way of street justice," the commissioner said.

After the killing of 21-year-old Kadiyen Illidge, Governor Bryan pleaded with the community to support and help the government and VIPD. "We have to stand as one people to establish wrong from right and discontinue our silent overlooking of wrong that happens in our community," he said.

Chief Elskoe condemned these acts of violence by stating, "As a community, we cannot allow this to keep happening. If you know who did this, do the right thing and let us know so we can bring these individuals to justice."

Anyone with information on these incidents is encouraged to call police at 911, the Crime Tipline at (340) 778-4950, or call Crime Stoppers USVI at 1 (800) 222-TIPS.