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Over 20 Individuals Involved in Fight at Buck Island; Feds Apprehend Driver of Vessel From Which Shot Was Fired; Gun Recovered

Crime / **Published On January 11, 2021 06:56 PM /**

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Buck Island, St. Croix

ST. CROIX — The Virgin Islands National Parks, part of the National Park Service said Monday afternoon that over twenty people were involved in a brawl that led to gunshots being fired at the Buck Island Reef National Monument Sunday afternoon. The beach has become one of the favorite Sunday getaways for locals, as well as being a must-visit attraction for tourists. However, the monument's popularity with locals has brought with it some unfortunate incidents, with Sunday's brawl and shooting being the most dangerous yet.

According to the Park Service, a physical altercation with more than twenty individuals broke out on the monument that led to multiple shots being fired. Immediately after, Park Rangers were involved in a high-speed chase with the suspected persons and vessel.

After several hours of searching, the United States Coast Guard apprehended the driver of the vessel. The suspect was taken into custody and booked at a local law enforcement facility.

The vessel has been seized and inventoried. The Rangers have recovered a firearm which is believed to be the weapon used. "Currently, we have not received any reports of serious injuries or anyone being shot," said the Park Service. According to Reginald Tiller, V.I. National Parks acting superintendent, the gun was recovered from the vessel from which a gunshot was fired. Law enforcement were investigating whether the shot fired was after individuals involved in the fight, or in the air. Additionally, investigators were seeking to determine who on the boat fired the weapon, Mr. Tiller said.

The Park Service said it was working with the V.I. Police Department, the FBI and the U.S. Attorney's Office to bring forward the correct charges.

The fight and gunshots may lead to stricter enforcement of Buck Island rules [already in place](#), though the Park Service did not mention any restrictive action in its Monday afternoon release. Mr. Tiller told the Consortium that a meeting was being organized with Governor Albert Bryan and Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett, as well as the National Park Service's regional office in Atlanta.

"We will come up with some measures to try to find additional support for our Rangers to be able to better patrol what's happening out there," Mr. Tiller said. "I think what we have a sense of is that because places have been closing early [due to Covid-19], folks are looking for other outlets and Buck Island has become that."

The Consortium [first reported on the incident Monday morning](#). According to reports, the high-speed chase started in the open seas and continued on land, with at least one suspect leading law enforcement to multiple locations before being arrested.

A number of boats were reportedly stopped at Chenay Bay beach on Sunday afternoon by a number of law enforcement arms both local and federal. Boats were also reportedly pursued to Cramers Park. The Consortium witnessed a number of law enforcement on Sunday afternoon — including the V.I.P.D. with sirens blaring, and Park Service Rangers — on the East End as if responding to an emergency.

According to a video viewed by the Consortium, seen [here](#), multiple individuals were engaged in a brawl that saw at least one person being pinned to the ground while sustaining multiple punches from a number of other people. Thereafter, Park Service sirens started blaring and the fight, after a while, ended as those involved scattered.

The Buck Island National Monument is an uninhabited, 176 acre island about 1.5 miles off the northeast coast of St. Croix. According to the National Park Service, the island includes over 19,000 acres of submerged land, and was first established as a protected area by the U.S. Government in 1948. The U.S. National Monument was created in 1961 by John F. Kennedy and expanded in 2001 by Bill Clinton.

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