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VIPD Arrests Three in Aureo Diaz Heights Double Homicide During 'Operation the People Have Spoken'; Commissioner Says More Arrests to Come

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Law enforcement officers, including St. Croix Police Chief Sidney Elskoe, pictured above, announced the arrest of three suspects allegedly involved in the April 19 double homicide on St. Croix.

ST. CROIX — In an operation that included over 100 law enforcement personnel spanning a number of agencies and occurring in four locations in tandem at about 4:00 a.m. today, V.I.P.D. Commissioner Trevor Velinor announced that three of five men were arrested in connection with [the Aureo Diaz Heights shooting](#) that left two dead and four injured — including an 11-year-old girl.

"We're serious about fighting crime in our community," said Mr. Velinor, adding that the operation, dubbed "The People Have Spoken", was led by Commander Naomi Joseph and her team. The operation took place in the Aureo Diaz Heights housing community.

The three suspects have been identified as Gilberto Rivera, Jr., age, 30 Jameel Williams, age 28, and Luis Rivera, age 36. They were charged with first-degree murder, first-degree assault, third-degree assault, carry firearms openly or concealed, possession of ammunition, or discharging or aiming firearms, among other charges.

The two other suspects managed to leave the territory, one who fled right after the incident and another suspect who was hurt during the shooting but left for medical treatment. Commander Joseph said the V.I.P.D. knows where those persons are, and "they will be taken care of." Those individuals have been identified as Justin Nesbitt and Gilmore Rivera.

The operation included helicopters and other special operation tools and tactics. "This operation in terms of the arrest of these individuals today was so necessary that it required us tapping into resources beyond that of the Virgin Islands Police Department," Mr. Velinor said. Federal arms who participated included the DEA, FBI, U.S. Marshals, H.S.I. and CBP — "those are all the agencies that came forward and upon being called said they were going to participate," the commissioner made known. The V.I. National Guard was also tapped to participate and provided the V.I.P.D. with additional resources needed.

The commissioner, under pressure recently from lawmakers — one of whom called for Mr. Velinor's contract with the government [not to be renewed](#) — used the opportunity to herald the police department's efforts in combating criminal activity. "In this operation we weren't going after individuals who were choir boys, we weren't going after individuals who were simply washing cars, we were going after trigger pullers, so we went into this community very early this morning," Mr. Velinor continued. "Some of you heard helicopters or planes flying around in the neighborhood. Yes, that was part of this investigation and it resulted in us successfully apprehending three individuals who again are trigger pullers associated with the killings that took place on [April 19]."

Mr. Velinor again stressed the police force's commitment to serve the community and keeping Virgin Islanders safe. "These actions that those individuals did, they were horrendous, they were vile, and we took action and will continue to take action," the police commissioner said.

Mr. Velinor assured the community that the sprawling operation was one of several aimed at removing violent criminals off the streets.