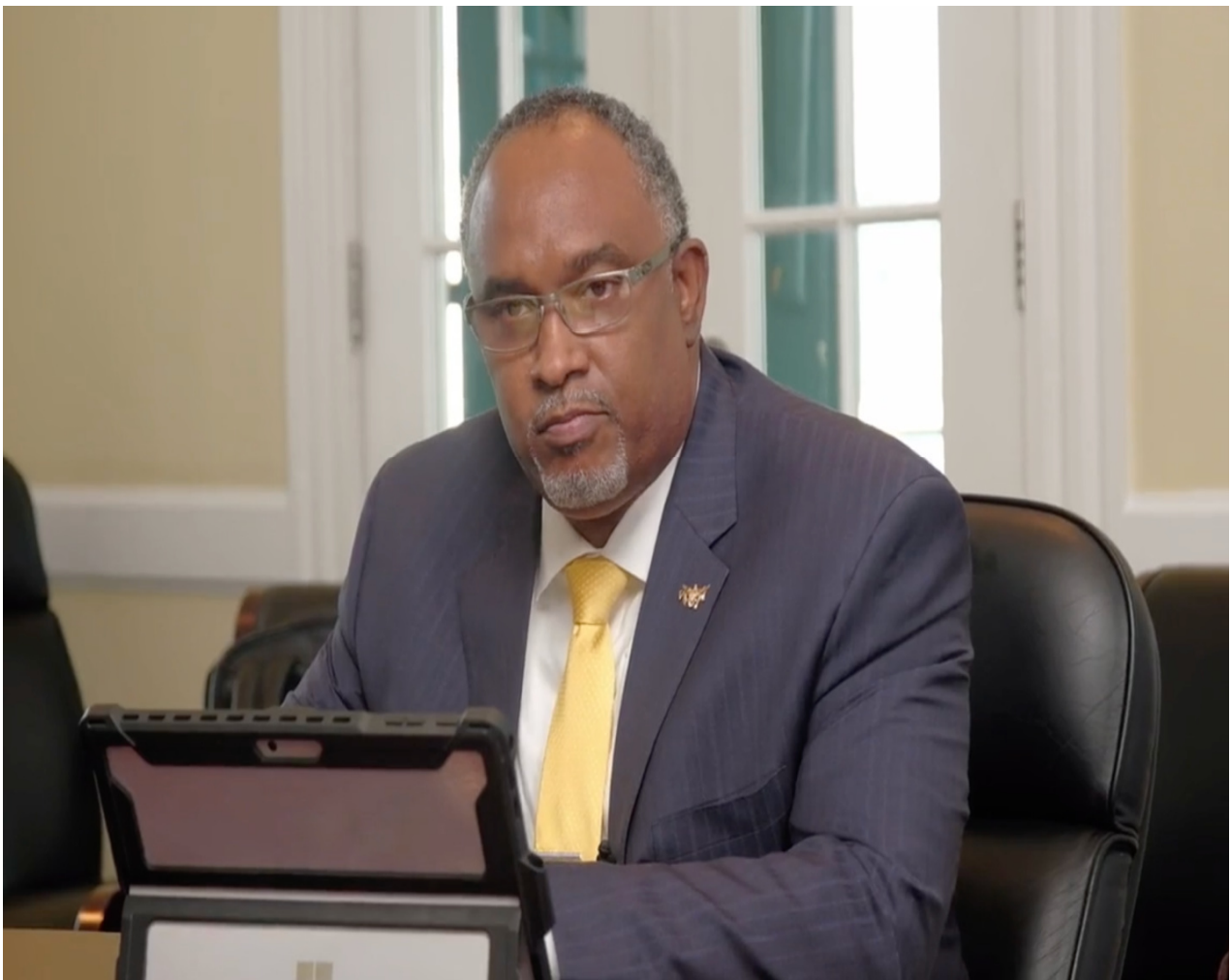


The Virgin Islands Consortium

VIPD Commissioner Nominee Sees Use of Technology as Crime Deterrent, Public Figures Leading Crime-Prevention Efforts, and New Vehicles Lifting Police Morale

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Police Commissioner Nominee Ray Martinez

V.I. Police Dept. Commissioner Nominee Ray Martinez on Wednesday evening introduced some of his initiatives and strategies, including the use of technology to solve crimes during an episode of the Bryan administration's "Inside the Cabinet" program.

Mr. Martinez, who believes the initiatives will result in an increase in community confidence in the V.I.P.D., acknowledged that the past six months have been a “really tough time” for the police force.

“The success of the department is based upon just that, the ability of the department to not just solve crimes but solve crimes through arrests and prosecution,” he said.

He said doubling the range of the ShotSpotter system, which detects where gunshots are coming from, and quadrupling the amount of CCTV cameras installations with license plate readers would help reduce criminal activity. Mr. Martinez said there were over 100 CCTV cameras currently installed.

The commissioner nominee said the V.I.P.D. will be able to use the CCTV cameras in tandem with the ShotSpotter system, enabling a live view of an area once activity is detected.

Mr. Martinez alluded to internal strategies that he said could not be shared publicly, however, “once we implement those changes and strategies, I am certain the public is going to see and understand what is going on.”

He said the department was “in the process of purchasing an entire vehicular fleet to supplement our practically out-of-contract vehicles.” He expects this to lead to an increase in morale among officers and hence a lift in response times.

Mr. Martinez also intends to implement schedule changes that should result in more manpower and police visibility.

When discussing the community's role in solving crimes, Mr. Martinez said while he understands the V.I.P.D.'s push to encourage residents to provide tips, “I also understand that the ‘see something, say something’ motto is actually irrelevant if the community does not trust or have confidence in the police department and our officers.”

Later in the show, when asked about increasing community confidence in the V.I.P.D., Mr. Martinez said, “Their confidence is less than we would like it to be. We have to build on that. Simply put we are going to increase that confidence by responding to cases timely, by investigating cases fully, making arrests, obtaining prosecutions and just getting out of our vehicles and sometimes just simply speaking respectfully to the public.”

He explained that while the department will be going after major crimes, there will also be a focus on small items such as heavily tinted vehicles, erratic drivers, and occasions where large trucks force people off the road.

The commissioner nominee was asked whether the V.I.P.D. would be able to meet the mandates of the Dept. of Justice consent decree on the police force. “Yes,” he said. “I fully believe that we will be out of the consent decree in short order.”

On the Office of Gun Violence Prevention and the Governor's Advisory Council on Community Violence Intervention, Mr. Martinez saw those efforts' role as “non-law enforcement centric strategies” that should have an emphasis on “focused deterrents.”

He explained that focused deterrents are "the ability for us to hand-pick certain community leaders" and place them at the forefront of those strategies. "We cannot enforce our way out of the violent crimes," he said. "A number of the issues that we have are really issues that began and will be addressed in great portion from a social aspect."

According to Mr. Martinez, group violence intervention "takes individuals from our community and have them actually get out there and start speaking and start working alongside some of the very young folks that are engaged in violent crimes, gang and illegal group activity or just individuals that by themselves are starting to go down the wrong path."

"Sometimes we just have to be honest that a strong community figure will be a lot more successful than the enforcer, the police, the courts," he said.