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Shooting in Watergut, Robberies Across Island: Crime Wave Impacts St. Croix; Police Chief Says Organized Criminals Using Strategy

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Police cordoned off the shanty area in Watergut on Sunday, Aug. 22, 2021 following at shooting that left a man with multiple gunshot wounds. **By. VI CONSORTIUM**

ST. CROIX — In just over a week, roughly ten incidents of robbery, shootings and a homicide have been reported by the V.I. Police Department on St. Croix alone, with St. Thomas also experiencing multiple violent events during the same period.

Relative to the St. Croix incidents, last week, the Mc Donald's Restaurant in Golden Rock [was robbed at gunpoint](#); days later [Rossie's Bar and Restaurant was also robbed](#) at gunpoint; during the same week, [four women became victims of robbery](#) in Christiansted, including on the boardwalk;

days earlier, the Belly Full Bar & Restaurant [was robbed at gunpoint](#); a man [shot at women in Frederiksted](#), stole their vehicle and fled the scene; on Sunday a home invasion incident occurred on the East End of St. Croix near Divi, where a victim was reportedly pistol-whipped.

The ongoing rash of criminal activity, the most prevalent being armed robberies, started before last week, and the territory's chiefs of police provided a message to the community on Aug. 1 regarding the incidents.

St. Thomas-St. John Police Chief Steven Phillip, who spoke on incidents where criminals have shot at police, stated, "To the criminal element, if any member of the Virgin Islands Police Department encounters force while executing their duty, we will respond with equal and opposite force."

St. Croix Police Chief Sidney Elskoe said organized criminals on St. Croix were carjacking individuals to then use those vehicles for other crimes. "There are organized criminals in the Virgin Islands that have decided to steal cars by violent means. They then use those cars to commit other violent acts. Moving forward, in an attempt to keep the community safe and informed, we intend to broadcast descriptions of these individuals and their stolen cars on social media and news outlets," Chief Elskoe said.

The community has not heard from Ray Martinez, Governor Bryan's new police commissioner nominee, regarding the wave of crimes in both districts. Speaking during his [nomination announcement](#) on July 6, Mr. Martinez said he understood the task of police commissioner is difficult. "I understand that this is a yeoman's task, but I'm confident that with the assistance of the men and women in blue, along with our great community, that I will be successful," he said.

The community has not heard Mr. Martinez since his announcement comments either through a press event to share his plans with the community, or to address the wave of violent incidents affecting both districts.

Calls placed to Mr. Bryan over the weekend for comment on the ongoing and often brazen criminal acts were not immediately returned.

On Sunday, Mr. Derima reported multiple criminal incidents, including what the department described as a possible homicide in Vista Concordia [where a woman was found stabbed](#) to death and her body already decomposing. A police source told the Consortium that the deceased victim was viciously stabbed to death. Also on Sunday, Mr. Derima reported [a robbery incident at Old Fredensborg Village](#), where a 14-year-old boy was held at gunpoint at his residence while criminals rummaged through the home's items, stealing jewelry, cash and electronics.

On Sunday night, a shooting incident in Watergut left one man with multiple gunshot wounds about the body, Mr. Derima confirmed to the Consortium. He said the incident occurred in the vicinity of the shanty at about 8:51 p.m.

The victim was transported to the Juan F. Luis Hospital and Medical Center for treatment. His condition was unknown at time of writing.