The Virgin Islands Consortium

New Police Commissioner to Reshuffle Leadership at Department, Says Governor Bryan; VIPD to Pursue Robberies 'Harder'

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Police cordoned off the roadway following a shooting incident at Rainbow Beach in 2019. By. VI CONSORTIUM

Police Commissioner Nominee Ray Martinez will lead a leadership shakeup at the Virgin Islands Police Department in a restructuring effort whose end goal is to see more effective policing, Governor Albert Bryan said over the weekend.

Speaking to the Consortium Sunday, the territory's leader spoke to the wave of crimes occurring in the USVI and said Mr. Martinez, who has spent an entire career at the

V.I.P.D., was well positioned to place individuals in roles that would extract their best performance.

"Expect to see the commissioner come out with some leadership changes because he's been in there a while, [and] he's tried to study who's better at what, and I think these leadership changes that he's going to do are more of a statement about best fit rather than nonperformance," Mr. Bryan said.

The governor said while the current police chief positions would most likely remain in place, positions such as deputy chiefs and other important roles within the department that affect crime-fighting would be rearranged. He further stated that while former Police Commissioner Trevor Velinor tried to put people in place that Mr. Velinor believed would best fit their skillset, Mr. Martinez "has a historical understanding of people's skills, and I think he's going to use that knowledge to try to better create a team."

People won't be let go during the reshuffle, the governor stated. "We don't want to lose anybody off of our team because we don't have enough crime-fighting capability."

Mr. Bryan spoke to the violent crime the territory has been experiencing. On the homicides, he said, "There are these key shooters that we need to get off the street that are creating this mayhem."

On the robberies, he stated, "Particular vexing to me is the robberies that we've been seeing. Those we're definitely going to be pursuing a little harder."

The bulk of homicides so far for 2021 has been on St. Croix, which accounts for 24 of the territory's 31 homicides while St. Thomas accounts for 6 and St. John 1.

"I think what we need to have is a very decisive, surgical move in St. Croix to try to take out some of these people," Mr. Bryan said. "But we haven't been finding that these crimes are connected; it's kind of like random."

Last week, V.I.P.D. Criminal Investigation Bureau Commander Naomi Joseph called out the community for not doing enough to help bring criminals to justice.

Speaking during a press briefing held to discuss a homicide that occurred on Carlton Road in Frederiksted, St. Croix, CDR Joseph spoke passionately and bluntly about the lack of support from persons who have incriminating information about individuals suspected of perpetrating unlawful acts.

"You're holding the information to your chest while more people get harmed. I'm just asking please call 911, call Crime Stoppers, call 340-778-4950, call 340-712-6092. Call us. We need your help because we cannot solve crime without the bigger police force, you the community at large," she said.

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