The Virgin Islands Consortium

Martinez Details Crime-Fighting Plan During Successful Nomination Hearing in Rules and Judiciary Committee

Crime / **Published On October 22, 2021 05:29 AM /**

Kyle Murphy October 22, 2021

Police Commissioner Nominee Ray Martinez

Police Commissioner Nominee Ray Martinez moved one step closer to confirmation after providing a detailed testimony to lawmakers during a Committee on Rules and Judiciary hearing Thursday. Mr. Martinez, who has been proactive on the job since being nominated by Governor Albert Bryan, was praised during the hearing and is expected to win approval in the Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Martinez gave a very detailed testimony that touched on his background and focused on his plans for the department if he were to be confirmed as the next commissioner. He spoke of his over two years as the director of the Law Enforcement Planning Commission (LEPC), where he “oversaw the agency with exclusive oversight to administer, monitor several streams of federal funds that addressed criminal justice, juvenile delinquency and victim service initiatives for the U.S. Department of Justice grant programs."

Mr. Martinez said that since he accepted the nomination, he has constantly been asked why would he leave the LEPC and take up the challenge of the police department with all its problems. In response he would say, “This is my home and I have no intentions of leaving. I believe I possess the knowledge and leadership abilities necessary to lead the V.I.P.D.”

He previously worked at the V.I.P.D. from 2003-2015 where he served in multiple roles, including the acting deputy commissioner and criminal intelligence director. "During this period I became smitten by the law enforcement bug, an interest that quickly mushroomed into an infatuation," he said.

The nominee said he served six years as a member of the Public Employee Relations Board and subsequently three years as the executive director of the board. While there, "I honed my labor relation skills.” He also was an executive assistant to Lieutenant Governor Gerard James and worked eight years as an aircraft rescue firefighter with the Virgin Islands Port Authority."

Mr. Martinez did not mince words when talking about violent crimes, calling them “the plague of community." He added, "Historically these violent incidents happened at nights and on weekends, in places deemed high-crime areas. Of late there has been an uptick of daytime and early-evening incidents occurring in busy business and public areas. This unfortunately suggests that perpetrators are not in the least worried about being identified or harming innocent bystanders...this further suggests violent actors are taking the time to gather intelligence on their victims as opposed to utilizing classic opportunistic means.”

He said this boldness makes it harder for investigators to solve cases, which results in “the community calling into question V.I.P.D.’s ability to safeguard them.”

The commissioner nominee then focused on how proactive measures have been instrumental in the seizure of guns and drugs, as well as the apprehension of violent criminals.

From July, when Mr. Martinez was nominated, to September, “Intel-driven firearm initiatives targeting individuals known to possess illegal firearms have netted 24 firearms and 17 arrests,” he said.

He added, “The introduction of a violent crime reduction strategy is integral to any success we intend to realize... V.I.P.D. is committed to increasing efforts to reduce violent crime within the territory by developing a multi-faceted violence reduction strategy based on proven, evidence-based strategies.”

The aim is to utilize “research from a combination of traditional, hot-spots, intelligence-driven, problem-oriented, community oriented, and focused deterrence policing strategies

and have a real world impact," he said.

Mr. Martinez said the plan will have an “aggressive short-term emphasis on substantially increasing police visibility in concentrated areas and prioritizing street-level deterrence and arrest of repeat offenders in these areas through strong intelligence gathering.”

He said the long-term portion of the plan "incorporates a focused deterrence strategy that reduces conditions associated with violent crime that helps break the cycle of violence in areas and with persons that have long been associated with continued acts of violence.”

Mr. Martinez acknowledged that the V.I.P.D. cannot accomplish this feat alone. He said the long-term element “requires collaboration with outside stakeholders, including the Office of Gun Violence Prevention and the Governor’s Advisory Council on Community Violence Intervention, as well as other departments, nonprofit organizations, and businesses.”

The V.I.P.D. still relies primarily on a traditional (reactive) policing model as its chief operational strategy, Mr. Martinez said. He said that since 1972 and every 20 years thereafter, the traditional model has been tested by criminologists with the same resulting outcome — "as a standalone operational strategy, the traditional model is a failure.”

He also spoke of “personnel shortages, low morale, and Consent Decree mandates” as challenges that the department has been facing for years.

Mr. Martinez announced that the V.I.P.D. will work with the New York Police Department to establish a memorandum of understanding that will including four N.Y.P.D. officers being sent to the territory: 2 on St. Thomas and 2 on St. Croix, for six months working with VI police officers to help revamp the department’s Intel Unit.

He touted the success of the LiveView mobile solar surveillance units that have been used on the Christiansted Boardwalk, which he said have decreased “snatch and grab incidents and robberies” as an example of how the department is using new technologies successfully.

The units have also been used on St. Thomas and St. John, and the department has received an additional six units that will be deployed shortly.

Also, a purchase order has been approved for additional drones, bringing the force's total fleet to six functional and two practice drones. These new drones are expected to be in the territory in 90 days.

Mr. Martinez said the department will also be purchasing three additional vessels for open-sea use and shore patrols which he said will bolster the department’s presence on the water.

Another one of his priorities is to strengthen working relationships with federal partners. The commissioner nominee said that since his appointment, “fruitful meetings with Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), High Intensity Drug Trafficking Agency/Drug Enforcement Administration (HIDTA/DEA), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Customs and Border Patrol (CBP)” have been held.

Mr. Martinez provided a list of things he has done since his nomination in mid-July:

- Met formally and informally with several of the unions where I provided an overview of my leadership philosophy and my current plans
- Met with Federal law enforcement partners from FBI, HIDTA/DEA, HIS, and CBP
- Held introductory meetings with the Consent Decree Independent Monitor and attended Quarterly Consent Decree Evidentiary Hearing
- Approved the purchase of new marine assets and upgrade of engines
- Purchase orders are approved for new NIBIN systems and microscopes in each district.
- Dialoged with police unions regarding plans for a 12-hour shift stipulation
- Travelled to New York City along with Gov Bryan and Senator Payne where we met NYPD officials to obtain information on modern crime fighting techniques and use of technology to include: Crime-fighting techniques and technology and the strategic use of limited numbers of law enforcement officers, Real Time Crime Center?(RTCC) operations that aid in crime prevention, investigative services, and anti-terrorism techniques, Attended NYPD Compstat meeting. Compstat is most valuable as an instrument to increase communication and accountability within the police department among the Chiefs of Police and Commanders.
- Met with National Networks for Safe Communities out of John Jay College, creators of the focused deterrence model I am a strong advocate for.
- I announced my leadership team at a press briefing on September 3rd. My leadership selections were based on experience, leadership skills, respect amongst their peers and a desire for positive change that promotes the Police Department.

In closing, Mr. Martinez said, “I will lead by being firm but fair in executing my duties and rendering my decisions that will have a positive and lasting effect on my department and on our community….At times managing the department may seem an insurmountable task, daunting at times. I am, however, equal to the task as I am resolute in executing my duties to accomplish the goal of improving the VIPD.”

Senators Novelle Francis, Kenneth Gittens, Franklin Johnson, Carla Joseph, Steven Payne and Milton Potter voted in favor of moving forward the nomination, while

committee member Genevieve Whitaker did not vote.

The committee also forwarded the renomination of Oran Roebuck to the UVI Board of Trustees by a unanimous vote.

© Viconsortium 2026