

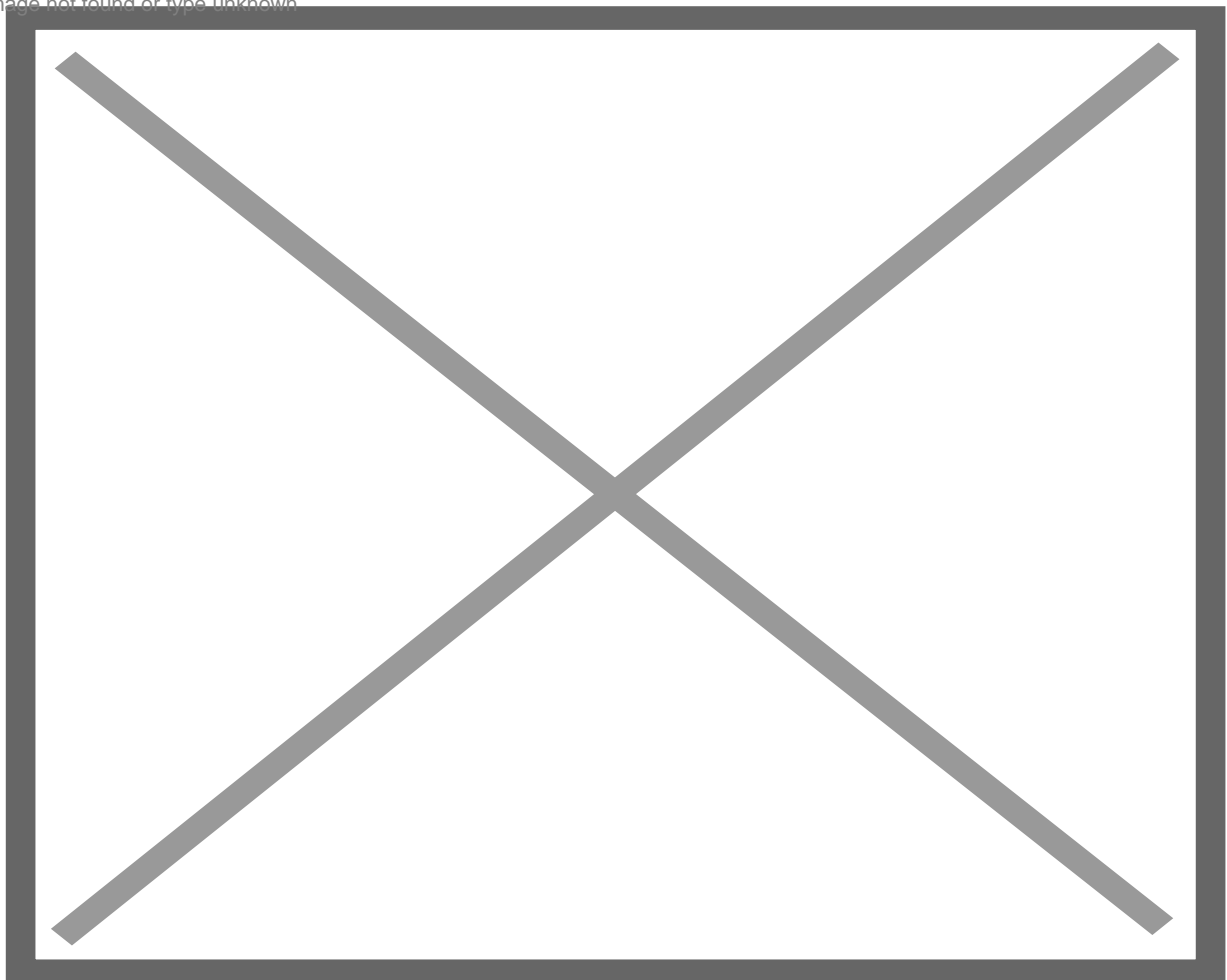
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Three Students Arrested on St. Croix Following Violent Brawl at Complex; Police Lockdown CAHS After Threat of Shooting; Knives Found on Campus

Business / **Published On September 01, 2022 07:50 PM /**

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Aerial shot of the St. Croix Educational Complex High School. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

Public schools in the U.S. Virgin Islands have been experiencing a surge in violent fights in recent weeks, culminating on Thursday with a brawl at the St. Croix Educational Complex that resulted in the arrest of three students — two females and one male, all minors — while one parent was detained. The Charlotte Amalie High School was also on lockdown following the credible threat of a shootout.

The students were charged with simple assault and battery, and disturbance of the peace.

Police Commissioner Ray Martinez told the Consortium that the V.I.P.D.'s tactical team was dispatched to CAHS around 8:30 a.m. and the school was on lockdown until about 10:00 a.m. "We had a threat and we couldn't confirm whether the threat was going to happen or not," the commissioner said, which he said prompted the department to station the tactical unit at the school's gate while other officers patrolled the campus.

The Consortium has seen several videos of the violent fights occurring across the territory's public schools, including multiple videos today showing a brawl at the St. Croix Educational Complex. One video clip shows monitors attempting to subdue a parent on the Complex school grounds. Mr. Martinez said the parent was detained and eventually released.

On St. Thomas, the commissioner said several violent fights occurred in the days leading up to today's lockdown. Explaining the threat, Mr. Martinez said, "The school received a call or a notice from a student indicating that they overheard other students saying that there was going to be a shooting at the school today."

During the lockdown, which Mr. Martinez said was initiated by CAHS leadership, an inspection of the school was conducted. "My VIPD officers did not search anybody. We can't search any of the kids, we can't touch any of the kids. We're just there with our presence while the monitors and the school's administration and staff were doing the search of the bags," he said.

Five juveniles were arrested in St. Thomas in recent days "for their participation in brawls" on school campuses. "As a result of that, when the information came out about possible shooting threats at the school, we took action. The V.I. Dept. of Education and the V.I.P.D. have been in conversations and we've trained together for these types of lockdowns. And that's what we did and we effectuated it this morning," the commissioner said, stressing that the V.I.P.D. must take preemptive measures to prevent the violence.

Mr. Martinez said that as a result of the search, several knives and other contraband were confiscated at CAHS today.

The Ivanna Eudora Kean High School was also on lockdown from about 9:00 a.m. to 9:45 a.m., and no contrabands were discovered, Education said Friday.

A fight between two male students on Wednesday in the vicinity of CAHS, in the Barbell Plaza Area near Petrus Gas Station, saw one student wielding a knife, according to video of the incident viewed by the Consortium. The students eventually started throwing punches at each other, though it was unclear whether one was injured by the weapon. A V.I.P.D. officer was in the same area where the fight occurred, however he appeared to only get out of his vehicle when the fight ended, according to the video.

"We will continue to respond in a manner that safeguards our students. Our parents and community send our kids to school to learn, and our response will always be to safeguard our students and teachers in that learning environment," Mr. Martinez said.

The V.I. Dept. of Education [held a discussion on Wednesday](#) about the fights. Education Commissioner Nominee Dr. Dionne Wells-Hedrington said the department has been looking at new ways to safeguard campuses.

"We had the V.I. Fire Service, the V.I. Police Department, we had the Emergency Management System, the Rescue persons along with V.I.D.E. personnel. We walked our campuses to look for ways and different things that we could do to ensure that we do a better job in protecting our

students, faculty and staff," she said. "And so while are doing that, we also want to make sure that our teaching and learning environment are conducive to learning.

"While we're fixing our buildings to make sure that everything is in place when it comes to the overall safety of our campus, we need our students to understand the importance of compliance," she said.

Correction: Sept. 2, 2022 at 8:54 a.m.

A previous version of this article stated that following a lockdown at the Ivanna Eudora Kean High School Thursday morning, contraband were confiscated. The V.I. Dept. of Education said on Friday, Sept. 2, 2022 that no contraband were discovered at IEKHS, however knives, scissors, and brass knuckles were found at the Charlotte Amalie High School. The story has been updated to reflect the correct information.

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