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# VIPD Officer Shot and Killed in St. Thomas; Suspect, Wearing a Bulletproof Vest, Now in Custody; Officer Identified; Bryan Issues Statement

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Ernice Gilbert **July 04, 2023**

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ST. THOMAS — A V.I. Police Department officer was shot and killed in St. Thomas on Tuesday morning while responding to an incident in Hospital Ground in an area called "Jah Yard", the Consortium can confirm.

According to police sources, a concerned resident called emergency services to report the sighting of an armed man brandishing a firearm. When officers arrived on the scene, the suspect is said to have opened fire on the officers, who in turn returned fire, striking the suspect twice, according to VIPD sources. However, the suspect, who police have identified as Richardson Dangleben, was wearing a bulletproof vest, police say, and had multiple firearms on his person. One officer sustained multiple gunshot wounds during the shootout and was transported to the Schneider

Regional Medical Center for treatment. He later succumbed to injuries sustained during the incident.

The deceased officer has been identified as Delberth Phipps, Jr., 42. He served seven years at the VIPD, 6 as a detective, according to VIPD Director of Communications Glen Dratte.

Governor Albert Bryan issued a statement Tuesday morning, saying he was infuriated and saddened by the incident. Mr. Bryan also expressed condolences to the VIPD and the deceased officer's family, and he ordered the U.S. Virgin Islands flag to be flown at half-staff for a week in honor and memory of the officer's death.

"I am incensed and deeply saddened by the loss of Detective Delberth Phipps Jr, who was killed in the line of duty this morning. This tragic incident reminds us of the risks our law enforcement officers face daily in their unwavering commitment to keeping our community safe and is a devastating blow not only to his family, friends, and colleagues but to the entire Virgin Islands community," the governor said.

He added, "My prayers and heartfelt condolences go out to his family and loved ones as they try to get through what I am sure is an unimaginably difficult time.

"I have ordered the Virgin Islands Flag to fly at half-staff for one week beginning at sunrise on Wednesday, July 5, in honor of Detective Phipps' service and sacrifice."

VIPD Commissioner Ray Martinez is expected to provide statements, the Consortium has learned.

Dangleben was arrested in February after [confessing to authorities that he had shot and killed a man](#), 68-year-old Keith Jennings, claiming he was defending himself from Jennings. He was released from custody.

*This is a developing story. Check back for updates.*