

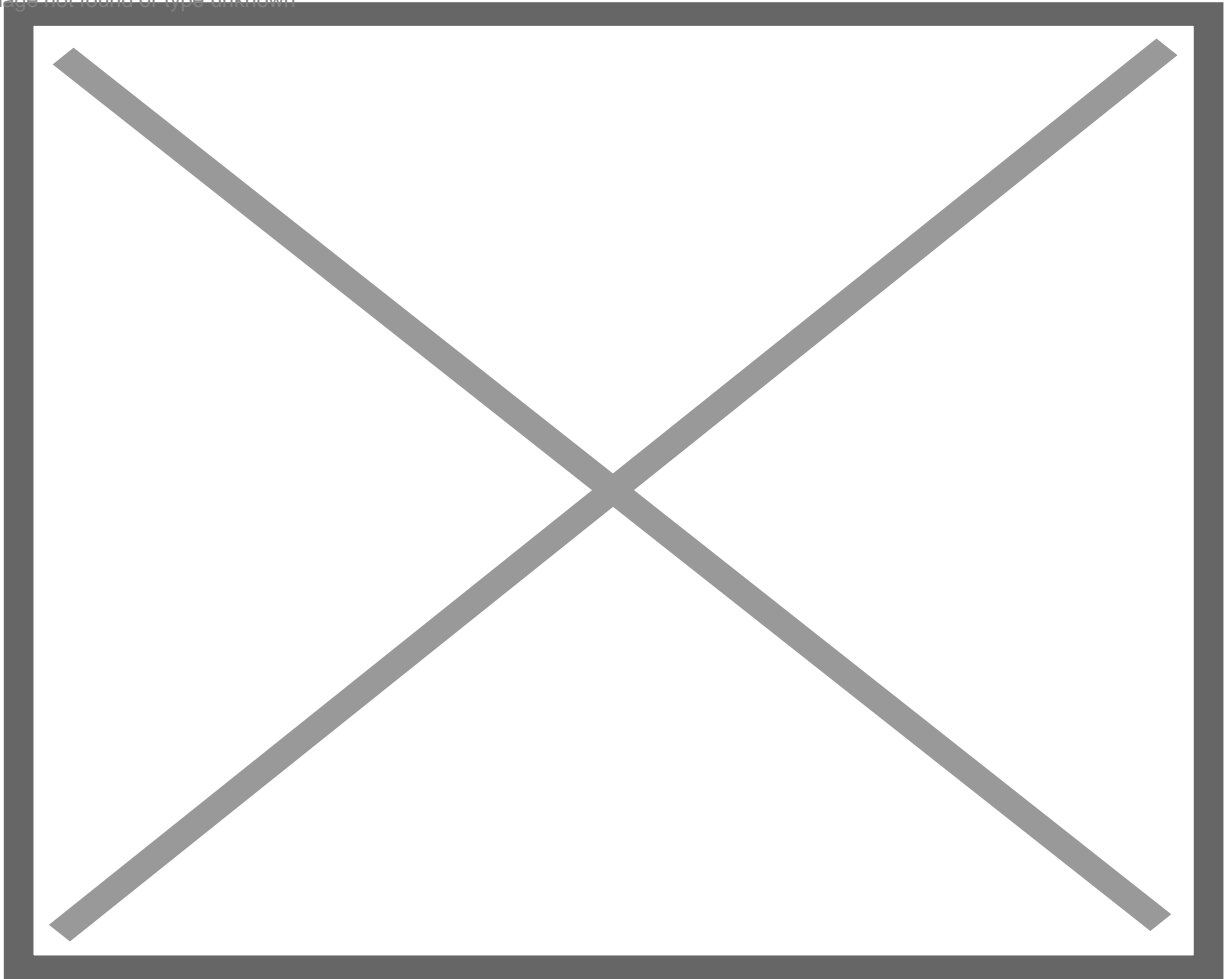
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Detective Phipps Was a 'Second-Generation Officer,' 'Rising Star,' Says Police Commissioner; Senators Share Condolences

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Ernice Gilbert **July 04, 2023**

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Detective Delberth Phipps, Jr. was shot to death on Tuesday, July 4 2023 while on the line of duty in St. Thomas, USVI. By. THE VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT.

The V.I. Police Department has issued a statement on the death of one of its officers who was shot and killed in St. Thomas Tuesday morning while on the line of duty.

Detective Delberth Phipps, a 7-year veteran with the department who held the rank of detective for 6 of those years, sustained multiple gunshot wounds when the gunman, identified by police as Richardson Dangleben, opened fire on Phipps in an area of Hospital Ground known as "Jah Yard". Police were dispatched to the location by a concerned resident who reported that

Dangleben was brandishing a firearm.

Though Dangleben sustained two gunshot wounds during the shootout, he was wearing a bulletproof vest and survived, while Detective Phipps expired at the Schneider Regional Medical Center. Dangleben was also transported to the hospital for treatment.

Dangleben was [arrested in February and later released](#) on bail after confessing to the shooting death of 68-year-old Keith Jennings, claiming it was in self defense.

On Tuesday afternoon, Police Commissioner Ray Martinez said Phipps's death has greatly impacted the police force. "Today is that day no department wants to experience," the commissioner said. "The loss of our Detective, Officer, and Brother has sent ripples through the Department. Detective Phipps made the ultimate sacrifice to Protect and Serve his community, our community! Detective Phipps a second-generation Police Officer was a rising star and will be sorely missed. I extend heartfelt condolences to his family as well as our VIPD family."

Police Chief in the St. Thomas-St. John District, Steven Phillips, said Phipps's death represents a "tremendous loss" for the department. "I am completely lost for words. We've lost a dear colleague. Detective Phipps was truly an outstanding Detective and individual. We are truly heartbroken," the police chief managed.

According to the VIPD, Dangleben was taken into custody. A preliminary investigation revealed that he was wearing a bulletproof vest and was armed with an assault rifle, handgun, and several hundred rounds of ammunition. He was out on bail for the February 24, 2023 first-degree murder of Keith Jennings, who was also shot and killed by Dangleben in Hospital Ground.

Senator Kenneth Gittens, a former law enforcement officer, criticized the justice system, lamenting that the homicide of Detective Phipps could have been prevented if Dangleben was held in custody for the first-degree murder charge.

"My heart is heavy as I express my deepest condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of the police officer killed today - Virgin Islands Police Detective Delberth Phipps Jr. I am even more deeply saddened by the fact that this is a tragedy that was possibly preventable in that the suspect in custody was out on bail for another crime," he said. "I am very concerned about the continued release of suspects on relatively loose bail conditions that are evidently not adhered to. In addition to the VIPD, the courts and the Department of Justice are the gatekeepers and the community must be protected from those arrested for violent offenses. My anger and sadness at this time are overwhelming."

Senator Angel Bolques also expressed condolences. He said, "To acknowledge an end of watch is never an easy thing. Our first responders put themselves on the front lines every time they are called out. We honor their commitment and sometimes take for granted the difficult job they have. At the end of the day, we want all of these men and women, who selflessly give of themselves, to go home to their families and loved ones. Detective Phipps will no longer be able to do that. His loss leaves a void within his community and the department. Our hearts and prayers go out to everyone impacted by this untimely departure."

Earlier, Governor Albert Bryan said he was furious about the death of the police officer, even as the Mr. Bryan conveyed sadness and called for the U.S. Virgin Islands flag to be flown at half-staff for one week. The governor also shared condolences with the family of Detective Phipps. "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," he 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."

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