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Pre-Trial Release for Man Who Murdered Detective Phipps Denied by Federal Judge

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Mugshot of Richardson Dangleben Jr. By. THE VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT.

ST. THOMAS — The man accused of killing VIPD Detective Delberth Phipps Jr. will not be released ahead of trial.

In federal court on Monday, U.S. Magistrate Judge Ruth Miller ordered that Richardson Dangleben Jr. be remanded into custody to await trial, because prosecutors have proven “by clear and convincing evidence that no condition or combination of conditions of release will reasonably assure the safety of any other person and the community.”

Dangleben was awaiting trial for the February murder of Keith Jennings, who was at a property owned by his relatives when he reportedly decided to approach Dangleben to speak to him. Moments later Jennings was [shot to death by Dangleben](#).

During his initial court appearance in connection with the death of Jennings, Dangleben was released into the third-party custody of his parents and was stripped of his firearm license, at least while the case wended its way through the court.

Months later, on Independence Day, Dangleben allegedly armed himself with a high-powered rifle and a handgun, donned body armor, and stockpiled over 100 rounds of ammunition. When police responded to the area of Hospital Ground known as Jah Yard in response to reports of a man walking around with a rifle, Dangleben was waiting.

He reportedly opened fire on police, hitting Detective Phipps. Dangleben himself was injured in the firefight, but while he survived, the popular VIPD Detective succumbed to his injuries at the Schneider Regional Medical Center.

In court on Monday, Judge Miller found that the weight of evidence against Dangleben was strong, and that a conviction would render him subject to a lengthy prison sentence. Given his prior criminal history, his participation in criminal activity while on supervised release, and his history of violence and use of weapons meant that the people of the Virgin Islands would be better served if Dangleben remained in detention ahead of this federal trial.

The murder of Detective Phipps has re-ignited the conversation in the territory surrounding the administration of bail by the courts. Even prior to their colleagues' murder, high-ranking police officers had [criticized the apparent leniency](#) of bail conditions ordered for known serial offenders or people charged with firearms offenses, especially given the chronic issues of gun violence that has been plaguing the territory for years.

Following Det. Phipps's murder, Police Commissioner Ray Martinez himself [called for a change](#) in the way bail is considered and determined for criminal defendants.

Meanwhile, the federal public defender assigned to the case has asked for more time within which to reply to the government's opposition to dismiss the charge of possession of a firearm with obliterated serial number, based on its alleged violation of Dangleben's second amendment rights. Government prosecutors are vehemently opposed to dropping that charge. Defense counsel is asking for a new deadline of August 21 because he will be working on cases related to the January 6 invasion of the Capitol for some time.

With the request for an extension unopposed by prosecutors, Judge Miller has granted the defense motion.

In the case of the murder of Jennings, Judge Denise Francois has ordered that the next hearings for discovery be held on July 26th .