



**Statement by Chief Minister Dr. the Honourable D. Orlando Smith
“Plan of Action on Crime Situation”
Wednesday, 21 September, 2005**

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The recent wave of violent crime that has stunned and saddened our Territory will be met by a vigorous response.

I have made a pledge on behalf of myself and this entire Government to do everything in our power to defeat criminal behaviour in the BVI and we will do so.

The criminal element that lurks in the shadows should know that they will not win. We will find them. We will arrest them. And we will send them to Balsam Ghut where they belong.

That also applies to the persons who attacked the victims last Thursday and Saturday. That applies equally to every thug that has committed a crime in the BVI or who plans to do so.

The people of the BVI have been challenged – and we are responding.

In this effort, every person, every organization, every office of Government and every institution of our society is called to contribute to the task.

I have been deeply grateful for the outpouring of concern from our Territory’s business leaders, religious leaders, neighbourhood activists and other prominent members of our community who have all committed to doing their part to help combat crime.

I want to encourage every citizen and resident of the Territory to stand shoulder to shoulder with your community leaders, your elected representatives and your police force. We are all in this fight together and we must begin to act that way.

Courage is not just about individuals – it is about the collective strength that comes from great numbers of people coming together in common cause.

We are all strongest when we stand together. And we need that kind of strength if we are to prevail over those who would bring a culture of violence, degradation and bloodshed to our peaceful shores.

For our part, since Monday I have been meeting with the Governor and we have both agreed on the following action items for the coming days, weeks and months.

Ladies and gentlemen, my Government's 7-point plan of action includes the following:

1. We have already initiated action to get immediate external assistance for the Royal Virgin Islands Police Force to develop plans to intensify the investigation in the recent series of gun-related crimes.
2. As a priority, the Police will increase their Stop and Search operations.
3. We will work closely with the National Intelligence Coordinating and Tasking Committee which comprises the Police, Customs and Immigration to heighten surveillance activity of persons who are here illegally or are unemployed or who are loitering with no intent. This committee identifies threats to our community and develops ways in which to combat these threats.
4. Most importantly, we are going to take immediate action to strengthen our police force and to improve cooperation between the police and the community.

5. In the coming days, we are going to prepare and present a proposal to reactivate the Police Advisory Committee. This Committee will serve as a vital bridge between the people of the Territory and their police force.
6. We will strengthen the force by adding 12 police officers and we are prepared to increase this number as necessary.
7. We are going to work with the police to ensure quick and efficient response to emergency calls.

It is unacceptable that citizens and residents of the BVI are hesitant to work with the police to solve crimes. We must fix that problem – for without strong and trustful relations between law enforcement and the law abiding people of this Territory, long-term progress will be impossible.

This means that the police must do more to reach out to the community and demonstrate their good faith. That also means that the community for its part must provide the necessary cooperation to the police.

As an immediate first step, I want to once again implore any individual who may know something about the recent crimes committed in our Territory to do the brave and right thing and communicate that information to the police immediately.

And as we work to build stronger bridges between the community and law enforcement, we must also make sure that the police have the tools they need to fight and win this battle.

So we are going to provide funding immediately to bring aboard 12 additional police constables. We will also look carefully at additional budget requests by the RVIPF for the 2006 budgets.

Let the people and police of the BVI have no doubt: this Government will spare no effort, no expense and no resource to fight and win the war on crime.

Finally, I am going to personally oversee the swift introduction of legislation in the Legislative Council to strengthen regulation of firearms in the BVI.

Gun crimes are a foul and evil scourge upon our land. Guns have no place in the BVI. And the Government of the BVI will pass the necessary laws to make sure guns are kept out forever.

Ladies and Gentlemen: We as a people are being tested by this wave of criminality. But we shall prevail because we are a people of peace. We are a people of values. And we are a people that believe in a moral order, in the laws of God and man, and in the sanctity of every human life.

But it is up to all of us to do our part. Every single law abiding and God fearing member of our community must now join hands and together we must say: Enough!

If we do that – and I know we will – then we will more than pass this test. We will put the criminals to route and restore peace to our community. And we will be the stronger for it.

I want to thank the Governor, the Police, my colleagues in Government, our dedicated public servants, and all the community leaders who have stepped up to the call of duty in the past few days.

We still have much work to do. But this fight is now engaged. And I have no doubt that working together – we will win.

Thank you for listening.