



**Press Statement by Chief Minister D. Orlando Smith
on the weekend crimes
Sunday, 18 September, 2005**

My fellow BVI Islanders:

Like all citizens and residents of the British Virgin Islands, I am shocked, saddened and angered by the recent spate of violence that has been visited upon us.

Earlier this afternoon I met with the members of my Government and we discussed the current situation and we will meet with our colleagues of the Opposition as we close ranks to work together to address this very serious problem.

I have also asked His Excellency the Governor to convene an emergency meeting of Executive Council tomorrow to develop and approve a plan of action for immediate implementation.

I will be reporting back to the Territory to update you on the specific steps we plan to take in response to these senseless tragedies.

In the meantime I want to appeal to all the people of the Territory to remain calm and resolute in the face of our most recent attack on one of our best and brightest young lawyers, Crown Counsel Kendoy Penn.

Each of the three terrible crimes committed this weekend will be treated separately and investigated individually. As we stand shoulder to shoulder with the victims' families we remain resolved to do our duty to think clearly and to move forward in an orderly fashion and with steady determination.

I appeal to every citizen and resident do their civic duty and cooperate with the police and to also volunteer any helpful information which can solve these crimes.

I am aware of the challenges that exist in relations between the police force and the community. I have spoken to these issues in the past and am fully committed to working to find long-term solutions to ensure strong and trustful relations.

But the priority at the moment has to be to find and prosecute the perpetrators of these appalling acts. In doing so, we will need the support of every one of you.

Because let us speak plainly: by their savage and terrible acts – the criminals who have perpetrated these crimes have declared war on the decent, law abiding citizens of our Territory.

But ladies and gentlemen, they will not succeed. We will not succumb to this scourge. I assure you we will do everything in our power to stop these assaults on our peaceful community.

We will shake every tree, we will overturn every stone, we will shine light upon every shadow to find the persons who did these deeds and bring them to justice.

The swift and mighty hand of justice shall be set upon those who have brought violence to our community.

My friends: The ugly face of violence has long been a stranger to us. That is as it should be and how it must be again. Sadly, the last few days have confirmed for us what we have long suspected – a culture of violence, criminality and brutality is trying to gain a foothold in the BVI.

It is a culture that is foreign to the BVI – it is a culture that devalues human life. It is a culture that puts money and instant gratification of base desires above all else. It is quite simply a culture of evil. And so let me say clearly – before we see our beloved BVI torn apart by this insidious threat, we will be roused to action.

I promise you tonight that here in the BVI we will not grow quietly accustomed to crime in our midst. We will not be reconciled to a life of fear and insecurity. We will not remain passive in the face of naked aggression by the thugs who seek to spread terror.

This community will rally together and we shall prevail. The road ahead will not be easy. But when we stand together and say with one voice: no more violence – no more bloodshed – then we can take our future into our own hands.

United we are stronger than the criminals. United we are stronger than the hooligans. United we are capable of restoring our society to what we know it to be: a place of peace, a place of security, a place of decency.

Let me conclude by asking every citizen, resident and visitor of our Territory to offer a prayer tonight – pray for the swift and complete recovery of those who have been hurt.

Pray for the relatives and families of those who mourn the loss of loved ones or are concerned about the recovery about those who have been injured. Pray, too, for the souls of the criminals that they may yet find the light of God and repent their ways.

And, above all, pray for the peace of our beloved home. Thank you. And may God forever bless our British Virgin Islands.