

Murder and Shootings and the Link to the Eastern Caribbean Trafficking Pipeline (ECTP) in St Vincent and the Grenadines 2017

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St Vincent and the Grenadines, Gun Crimes, Murder and the Eastern Caribbean Trafficking Pipeline (ECTP)

In 2016 St Vincent and the Grenadines (StV&G) recorded 40 murders for a murder rate of 36.482 which paints a picture in which gun violence is present and illustrated not only by the number of murders as a result of gun violence but also the number of shootings which did not result in death. The 2016 murder rate of St V&G places it in the category inhabited by the following countries of the Caribbean island chain and CARICOM: Belize, St Kitts and Nevis and Trinidad and Tobago with The Bahamas knocking the door to enter this category. This category is only eclipsed by Jamaica and the US Virgin Islands. The precipitous jump in the murder rate of StV&G is illustrated by the fact that in 2012 the murder rate was 25.61 which had risen to 36.482 in 2016 from 28 murders to 40.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_intentional_homicide_rate

The month of September 2017 was a particularly bloody month which spilled over into October 2017 but at a reduced pace. There were 9 murders in September with four persons surviving being shot with 7 persons killed in the final nine days of September. An analysis of the nine murders and shootings reveal the prosecution of a war on the ground for hegemony over the illicit economy of StV&G in which innocent bystanders are viewed as collateral damage. What is noteworthy is the willingness to shoot to death women gangland execution style and in the pursuit of their target to shoot women in the company of their target. One development in September 2017 that must be noted is the murder of a young female by a group of females in a home invasion of the victim's family home murdering her in full view of her family. This is another murder that reeks of gangland modus operandi/styling and it's a development that must be closely monitored in StV&G as it involved young females. What is noteworthy amongst the gangland shootings is the taking out of persons who were known break and enter and robbery artistes including those who recently exited the prison system. Usually this points to the possibility of taking what is not yours as a quantity of drugs, guns and cash etc. and the tit for tat killings roll out in gangland which provide the excuse for a power grab. In October 2017 the gunfire from 4 masked gunmen on the patrons of the Road Side Bar at Diamond resulted in 8 shot with one subsequent death as a result and 40 spent shells were recovered from the

scene. From reports of the shootings and murder events the gunmen/shooters are all masked, they arrive on the scene in motor vehicles without number plates or they simply walk up to their targets do the job and walk away. The Diamond shootings were then a message sent to those who controlled the Diamond turf that it was now contested turf. The number of murders as at October 2017 at the time of writing was 33.

<https://www.iwnsvg.com/2017/09/28/counting-the-dead-and-injured-in-svg-bloody-september/>

<https://www.iwnsvg.com/2017/10/02/octobers-beginning-mirrors-septembers-bloody-end-in-svg/>

<https://www.iwnsvg.com/2017/10/17/residents-recount-horror-of-diamond-mass-shooting/>

Prime Minister and Minister of National Security Dr Ralph Gonsalves in response to the Diamond shootings stated that there are 5 “associational groupings with criminal activity” in StV&G. The Prime Minister listed the operational bases of the associational groupings as follows: the electoral constituency of East St George, three in the Kingstown conurbation including the areas of Ottley Hall, Edinboro and Sharpes and in the South Leeward constituency. These electoral constituencies enumerated as operational bases of the associational groupings literally border each other as South Leeward, West Kingstown, Central Kingstown and East Kingstown with West St George separating East St George from the rest. And they all are located along the South, South east and South west coast of St Vincent away from the major ganja production sites. The Prime Minister stated that these 5 groups are in competition with each other in various spheres of activity and in the course of this battle for dominance these groups will contract foreign personnel to prosecute the war against their competitors. The Prime Minister insisted that these 5 associational groupings don’t fit the definition adopted for gangs and they are therefore not gangs demanding another definition. The reality is that indigenous Caribbean gangland doesn’t fit the definition of gangs adopted from US gangland and applied to Caribbean reality. Caribbean gang legislation defined by US gangland is then severely constrained to be applicable to the reality on the ground concerning indigenous Caribbean gangland. The 5 associational groupings of StV&G described by the Prime Minister

are then organised crime of the St V&G variety or indigenous Caribbean gangland StV&G styling.

Prime Minister Gonsalves is then blaming the 5 organised crime groups of StV&G for the gun violence that has targeted those assets marked for elimination and the innocent bystanders who are the collateral damage of this war for hegemony. Prime Minister Gonsalves speaking on the issue of the illicit small arms and ammunition trade into StV&G stated that there are multiple points of origin of illicit arms entering StV&G but those he mentioned were: the USA, Colombia, Venezuela and Trinidad and Tobago. The Prime Minister's position therefore raises the question of the volume of the trade and the capacity of the state to interdict the arms flow to the extent to impact the operational capacity of the 5 organised crime groups.

<https://www.iwnsvg.com/2017/10/17/gonsalves-faulted-mitchell-for-svgs-cocaine-problem-so-whos-to-blame-for-the-guns/>

<https://www.iwnsvg.com/2017/10/17/pm-identifies-5-associational-groupings-of-criminal-in-svg-2/>

http://security.gov.vc/security/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=186&Itemid=225

<https://www.iwnsvg.com/2017/10/22/amidst-a-spate-of-shootings-in-svg-a-focus-on-semantics/>

The reality of StV&G has to be placed in the context of the Eastern Caribbean Trafficking Pipeline (ECTP) and the special position of StV&G in this trafficking pipeline. The ECTP was created to move cocaine and heroin up the Eastern Caribbean island chain to Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands with an ancillary flow of cocaine into the French overseas departments and British colonies. Venezuela, Guyana and Suriname are the jump off transition zones of the pipeline with sea vessels being the dominant means of trafficking. All islands within the pipeline are then faced with an immediate and palpable increase in the volume of illicit drugs moved through their territory and more importantly exported from their territory to the EU, Canada and the USA.

<http://www.daurius.com/illicit-trades>

St V&G is unique in the operational structure of this pipeline as it's a premier production and export point for ganja both within the Caribbean and to the drug markets of the eastern seaboard of the US. Organic, high potency ganja presently fetches a wholesale price in these cities especially in New York which has created high grade organic ganja into a commodity worthy of fighting and dying over. Organic, high potency ganja grown in tropical, volcanic soil is then an apex/premier product of the pipeline attracting the level of investment by organised crime groups into production and trafficking that demands the hegemony of organised crime over the industry much more transnational globalised organised crime who are in fact the premier investors. These are the Caribbean affiliates of the Mexican Transnational Trafficking Organisations (MTTOs) who in joint action created and manage the ECTP.

The producers and traffickers of StV&G who are now affiliates of transnational organised crime groups that control the ECTP are traffickers of all the illicit products and participants of all the illicit enterprises of the pipeline. Such as trafficking cocaine, small arms, fuel and human smuggling in addition to ganja. Inclusion into the pipeline explodes the wealth generation capacity of the StV&G groups and impacts the terrain of the underworld in StV&G. The major issue is hegemony as the affiliates of transnational crime that control the pipeline must now exert hegemony over the underworld, gangland and The Game. Gangland affiliates are used to protect the interests of the pipeline on the ground and they share in the bounty of the pipeline turning them into transnational traffickers. This change impacts gangland as it creates glaring imbalances of wealth and power on the ground and those left out of the bounty react with a vengeful violence seen in the graphic violence used on targets especially with instruments other than guns. It also feeds a frenzy within the lower levels of gangland especially amongst the "baby bandits" that is expressed on the public especially the aged. The operational rules of the pipeline result in the exclusion of non-members of the pipeline from access to the products of the pipeline. Retail markets not under the control of the pipeline are then starved of product and the war for supply commences which only ends when the pipeline supplies product or an alternate supply is found. This is clearly seen in the retail ganja markets of the Caribbean as product shortages on the supply side have fed ganja wars for supply and the move to grow product locally to supply local demand. As ganja producers

stress on quality for export rather than lower quality with its lower prices for local consumption the low end market is now in the grip of a supply side deficit which breeds wars of supply on the ground.

The war on the ground impacts the murder rate it does not drive it. To prosecute a war on the ground requires sustainable resources which demands a sustainable supply of illicit products to maintain the earning power of the organised crime groups at war. The prime weapon is then to contract or end the supply side of the group you are at war with. With this accomplished the enemy simply shrinks, shrivels up and surrenders. The MTTOs are adept at squeezing supply and this is bolstered by giving up their targets to state law enforcement agencies.

The discourse of the new and alternate social order spawned by the illicit trades is illustrated in the spaces liberated from the hegemony of the state where all conflict is mediated through violence and the rule of the violent not law is the primary driver of the murder rate in trafficking transition zones as the Caribbean island chain. This challenge to the hegemony of the state and its hegemonic discourse is what is being expressed in StV&G today. The geographic areas of operation of the 5 organised crime groups of StV&G named by the Prime Minister are the prime contested spaces. Whilst the violence flows the changes to the nature of the social order are being affected which then expands the expanse of violence as a daily instrument of human survival and interaction. Eventually the change generates a sustainable momentum of its own in the absence of state intervention at the strategic juncture.

StV&G is in the grips of an evolutionary phase of its underworld and gangland never experienced before brought about by the impact of the ECTP on StV&G. Its underworld and gangland is in the grips of the great leap forward which will drastically change the nature and structure of the social order of StV&G. The issue is not only to identify the 5 organised crime groups but to place them in the dynamics of the ECTP and the consequent impact on the social order of StV&G and the rest of the Caribbean island chain.