

1 **36th LEGISLATURE OF THE U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS**
2 **SENATOR NOVELLE E. FRANCIS JR.**
3 **COMMITTEE ON BUDGET, APPROPRIATION & FINANCE**
4 **VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT**
5 **FY2026 BUDGET TESTIMONY**
6 **AUGUST 13, 2025**
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10 Honorable Novelle E. Francis Jr., Chair of the Committee
11 on Budget, Appropriations, and Finance; Committee Members; members of
12 the 36th Legislature; esteemed listeners and viewers; citizens of the United
13 States Virgin Islands, good morning.

14 I am Mario M. Brooks, the Commissioner of the United States
15 Virgin Islands Police Department (VIPD). It is an honor to be here today to
16 participate in this vital process. I am particularly pleased to be accompanied
17 by the VIPD's executive team, a group of exceptional professionals who are
18 prepared to provide thorough and transparent information as we discuss the
19 department's Fiscal Year 2026 Budget.

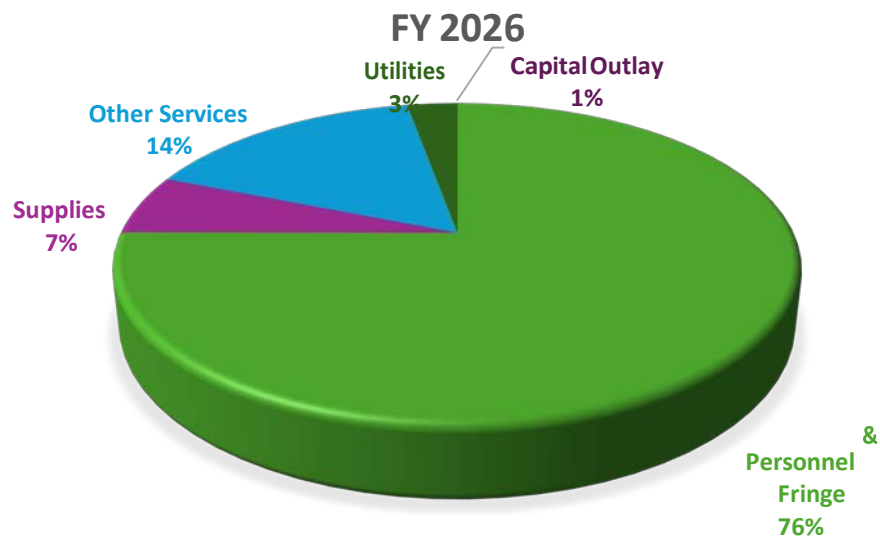
20 To begin, I would like to highlight several key accomplishments achieved
21 during FY2025. The Virgin Islands Police Department successfully reduced
22 overall crime by 4 percent, recovered 105 illegal firearms not inclusive of
23 the successful gun buy-back program, and effected 564 arrests while
24 maintaining a continued reduction in overtime expenditures.

In FY2024, the department expended \$24,126,044 in overtime. In FY2025 to date (July 24th, 2025), the department expended \$13,157,633 in overtime. At the current rate, we anticipate expending \$15,549,930 at the end of FY2025 which represents a 36% reduction or \$8,576,114 from FY2024 spending levels.

Budget Overview and Impact

VIPD's Fiscal Year 2026 General Fund Budget aligns with the Office of Management and Budget's recommended budget of \$73,339,167:

Personnel	\$40,345,456
Fringe	\$15,445,247
Supplies	\$ 4,787,675
Other Services	\$10,519,603
Utilities	\$ 1,801,186
Capital Outlay	\$ 440,000



Specific Allocations are included for:

Police Athletic League STT/STJ	\$65,000
Police Athletic League STX	\$65,000
Cadet STT/STJ Program	\$65,000
Cadet STX Program	\$65,000
Consent Decree	2,005,067
Crime Stoppers	\$100,000
Contribution Peace Officers Training Fund	250,000

Additionally, the department is set to receive an appropriation of \$3,000,000 from the Tourism Advertising Revolving Fund to support the VIPD's tourism related initiatives. The budget also includes non-appropriated funds of \$584,314 for the Peace Officers Standards and Training Fund and an additional \$11,714,637 anticipated from Federal funds.

Federal Grants

In FY2025, we received \$919,233 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding for a total of \$19,687,701 for 7 projects. We have 2 remaining open projects totaling \$2,715,312:

The Real Time Crime Center Personnel Project for \$616,378 and the VIPD Anti-Crime Initiatives for \$2,098,934 of which \$566,890 is encumbered for the In-car Solution contract, \$919,233 for the purchase of additional cameras and License Plate Readers and the the remaining \$612,812 for the establishment of the Drone program.

We plan to utilize \$16,120,252 in federal grants to supplement the General Fund. In FY2025 we received \$3,967,740 from the United States Department of Justice – Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Program to fund the salaries of 20 new police officers and \$338,786 from the Law Enforcement Planning Commission to fund the purchase of tactical gear and training for Officers.

The VIPD has also accumulated \$224,345 in Operation Stone Garden (OPSG) grant funding from the United States Department of Homeland Security, which supports our work with local and federal agencies to curtail illegal activities to include human and drug trafficking on our borders. To date, the Department of Homeland Security funding has allowed for \$15,158 in overtime reimbursements.

Due to natural disasters and issues along the Southwestern U.S. border, federal funding was redirected, resulting in the department receiving only \$85,000 in fiscal years 2022 and 2023 and \$54,345 in fiscal year 2024.

The department also has multi-year funding in the amounts of:

\$202,500 in Homeland Security grant funds for tactical equipment and S.W.A.T training.

\$50,000 in Homeland Security grant funds to assist with the upcoming election process.

\$1.5M from the United States Department of the Interior-Office of

Insular Affairs for the expansion of surveillance cameras.
\$2,000,000 for the Real Time Crime Center project.
\$3,984,000 for the buildout of 3 law enforcement vessels.
\$105,819 from the Law Enforcement Planning Commission in prior year
funding to support violence against women.

Virgin Islands Office of Highway Safety

In FY2025, the Virgin Islands Office of Highway Safety (VIOHS) received \$2,237,752 from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to fund 13 NHTSA projects. The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) awarded \$1,509,310 which will fund 3 federal grants through September 30th 2027. At the end of FY2025, any unused NHTSA fund balances will also roll forward to FY2026. The VIOHS has one FMCSA grant which will expire on September 30th 2025, and the anticipated de-obligated amount will be \$300,000 which includes funding for a key vacant position.

FEMA/Hazard Mitigation

The VIPD received \$12,872,869 in FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) funding for various disaster relief projects. These projects include generator installations and the retrofitting of facilities to

meet hazard mitigation standards. The Department obligated \$25,022,204 in FEMA Public Assistance Grants. In FY2025, the department received \$441,473 in FEMA Public Assistance reimbursements for a total reimbursement of \$16,559,847 for Hurricanes Irma, Maria and Covid-19. We recently obligated 7 new projects in the amount of \$100,587 for Tropical Storm Ernesto. To date, 5 projects totaling \$387,293 for safety equipment and building contents are in the process of de-obligation.

Consent Decree

The Virgin Islands Police Department (VIPD) continues to collaborate with the Independent Monitoring Team (IMT) on the path towards substantial compliance with the remaining provisions of the Consent Decree. The paragraph concerning Citizen Complaints remains in compliance and is expected to be removed from the Consent Decree by March 2026, marking the conclusion of its monitoring period.

As we move forward, the VIPD, IMT, and the U.S. Department of Justice remain aligned in our efforts. As we stay on course, we anticipate achieving full compliance with the remaining paragraphs by the end of 2025. At that point, we will enter a two-year monitoring period for the outstanding provisions. In preparation, the department is working to ensure that the appropriate policies and procedures are firmly in place to support long-term sustainability beyond the Consent Decree. Substantial compliance

at the completion of the two-year monitoring period will allow the VI Government to realize a cost saving of approximately \$700,000 annually.

Human Resources

In FY2025, we hired 15 new employees to strengthen both our sworn and civilian workforce. In addition to these hires, 17 Police Officer recruits successfully graduated from the Police Academy and have entered active duty, further reinforcing our commitment to public safety and personnel development. Despite these important gains, we experienced an annual turnover rate of approximately 8.9%, which highlights the need for sustained recruitment and employee retention strategies.

Recruitment Strategies

To address present and future staffing challenges, the department has taken a multi-pronged approach to recruitment and employee engagement. First, we are expanding the Police Cadet Program within local high schools. This program serves not only as a career-readiness initiative but also as a strategic recruitment tool. Since 2024, 18 cadets have graduated from the program with 3 being hired and 2 expected to join shortly. Additionally, we are pleased to report that 3 Police Auxiliaries have successfully converted to full-time Police Officers after completing their one-year probationary requirement.

Internship Program Revitalization

In alignment with our youth engagement and workforce development goals the department has created the Office of Youth Services. This office is responsible for PAL, Weed & Seed, Cadet, and Youth Internship Programs. The Youth Internship Program is being redesigned to specifically target high school and college students for placement in various positions within the department. The objective is to provide real-world experiences, foster interest in public service careers, and establish a new feeder system for future employment within the department.

The Police Activity League (PAL) is furthering its youth engagement mission through collaboration with the Jerry Browne Baseball League on St. Croix. We recently hosted a department-sponsored tournament featuring local youth and visiting teams from Puerto Rico and St. Thomas. This event did not only showcase athletic talent, but it also promoted regional camaraderie and positive interactions between law enforcement and the community.

Employee Recognition and Outreach

To further support retention and morale, the department has established an Employee Recognition Committee. This committee includes union representatives from both districts, and is tasked with identifying, recommending, and promoting initiatives to recognize outstanding service

and improve overall employee engagement.

We have increased our recruitment efforts to include the launch of our newly redesigned website, targeted advertising campaigns and our community outreach efforts.

Reducing Personnel Costs through Overtime Control

The department is actively engaged in reducing personnel costs by implementing stricter oversight and improved procedures related to overtime management. This includes the enforcement of policies governing overtime eligibility, usage, and documentation.

As a result, the department achieved a 36% reduction in overtime expenditures. I want to take a moment to sincerely thank my staff particularly the Chiefs and Deputies for their leadership and continued efforts in managing the reduction of overtime within their respective areas of responsibility. Their commitment to accountability, strategic scheduling, and resource management has made a noticeable impact on improving the department's operational efficiency. We will continue to refine these practices, track outcomes, and implement improvements as needed to maintain fiscal discipline without compromising public safety or operational readiness.

Training Bureau

Funding for the Training Bureau continues to ensure that all peace officers in the territory maintain certification requirements according to Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) in providing training - virtual platform and in person learning. During FY2025, approximately 3000 hours of instruction were delivered in Recruit Training, Peace Officer Certifications, and Officer Development. Instructions were inclusive of yearly firearms certifications training, taser, baton, Oleoresin Capsicum (OC) Certification, Ethics, Use of Force (UOF), and Domestic Violence (DV). There was also training for Auxiliary Officers who transitioned from part time to full-time officers and Lateral Transfer Training for Officers that came from other agencies. In addition, training was also delivered in Use of Force Investigations and Active Shooter Response. The Training Bureau continues to use Power DMS (the training database) to provide supplemental training for all sworn personnel. A testing component is also included at the conclusion of each block of instruction.

Other critical training conducted included Scenario Base Trainings, Mental Health First Aid Certifications, Court Room Testimony and Leadership Training (delivered by FLETC). The Training Bureau have also developed a program to train and certify Civilian Personnel in Mental Health First Aid. Training and certification on the use of the newly acquired noise

192 meters are currently in progress. In FY2025, VIPD graduated 23 Peace
193 Officers and 9 Auxiliary Officers and 8 full-time sworn personnel.

194 **Information Technology Bureau**

195 Officers have begun utilizing the e-citation system to issue citations, which
196 are electronically transmitted to the court system. Upon full implementation,
197 the e-citation will be extended to all law enforcement agencies. Phase II of
198 the e-citation will involve the deployment of additional hardware and
199 the integration of the system with other platforms.

200 Phase II of the camera installation project is in its final stages,
201 with the remaining work focused on installing the Pan-Tilt- Zoom (PTZ)
202 and License Plate Readers (LPR) cameras. Through our Real-
203 Time Crime Centers, the system continues to be monitored, actively
204 recording and providing real-time information to law enforcement personnel.

205 The In-Car Mobile Routing Solution contract for first responder vehicles
206 throughout the territory has been signed. This solution will provide officers
207 with the capability to transmit and receive real-time data within their
208 vehicles. It will also enable the 9-1-1 Emergency Communication Centers
209 through our Spillman software to view the real time location of the vehicles
210 and dispatch accordingly. In the meantime, the Chiefs are able to monitor

the precise locations of the active units in the field by way of our current GPS solution. Preparations are currently on the way for the deployment of 40 units, each will be equipped with the necessary hardware, internet access and secure connectivity to network resources from the vehicles.

The vendor for Real Time Crime Center has started building the required equipment and furniture for each of those locations. The completed products will then be shipped to the designated locations in both districts. These centers will be fully outfitted with the necessary furnishings and technological infrastructure to support personnel by delivering real-time information to officers in the field.

This platform will facilitate the integration of various types of cameras and applications into a unified map- based interface. The traffic light enforcement project is pending completion, contingent upon identification of a funding source. Ultimately, this tool will play a critical role in the Real Time Crime Center project.

Facilities Management

Virgin Islands Police Department continues to modernize and

228 harden its facility portfolio through an aggressive capital improvement
229 program supported by several FEMA Public Assistance awards. These
230 include the Alexander Farrelly Justice Center Retrofit, Leander Jurgen
231 Command Retrofit on St. John, the St. Thomas Impound Lot, the VIPD Sub-
232 Base Training Building, Anna's Retreat Repairs Project on St. Thomas, and
233 the Patrick E. Sweeney Headquarters Retrofit on St. Croix. These
234 efforts, coordinated with VITEMA and the Public Finance Authority (PFA),
235 reflect all major projects standing at 30% or greater in the design phase
236 beyond initial scoping. As these capital projects progress, VIPD has secured
237 multiple temporary leases across both districts. For FY2026, the St.
238 Thomas/St. John District is budgeted at \$787,931 in annual lease
239 obligation, whereas the St. Croix District is budgeted at \$1,740,111,
240 bringing the total territory-wide rent lease obligation to \$2,528,042.

241 In the St. Croix District, the Department has executed a new lease for a
242 brand-new police headquarters currently under construction, which will
243 finally allow VIPD to vacate the deteriorating Mars Hill location. This facility
244 is being built to the department's specifications and includes a
245 comprehensive facilities maintenance plan, developed in partnership with
246 the landlord, that addresses HVAC servicing, generator stability, electrical
247 load management, and plumbing system mapping to preserve building _____

integrity until the Patrick E. Sweeney Headquarters is complete. VIPD is currently developing similar maintenance plans for all leased locations to standardize upkeep and reduce emergency repairs.

While the Department presently occupies 20 leased sites across the Territory, the long-term strategy remains the consolidation of core operations into fewer, government-owned, modern facilities. This approach is expected to significantly reduce rent and maintenance costs, enhance efficiency, and improve employee morale.

Conclusion

In closing, we thank you for the opportunity to present our FY2026 budget request, providing a transparent overview of our achievements, challenges, and future initiatives. I am taking this opportunity to thank the people of the Virgin Islands. Your collaboration is crucial in our efforts to combat crime. I would like to recognize Johnny Cornelius and Sharon Bachan as our Employees of the Year. To my executive team, thank you for answering the call to service and dedication to leading this department. I cannot do it without you. To the entire VIPD family, sworn and civilian personnel alike we say thank you, thank you, thank you, for what you do every day for the people of this territory. This concludes my testimony, my team and I are ready to respond to your questions.