

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 **FY2027 BUDGET TESTIMONY**
6 **AUGUST 11, 2026**
7
8
9

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 2027 Budget.

20 To begin, I would like to highlight the significant statistical data
21 accomplishments and operational achievements by the Department during
22 FY2026. With support from the community, the Virgin Islands Police
23 Department steadily reduced overall crime by 8 percent from FY2024

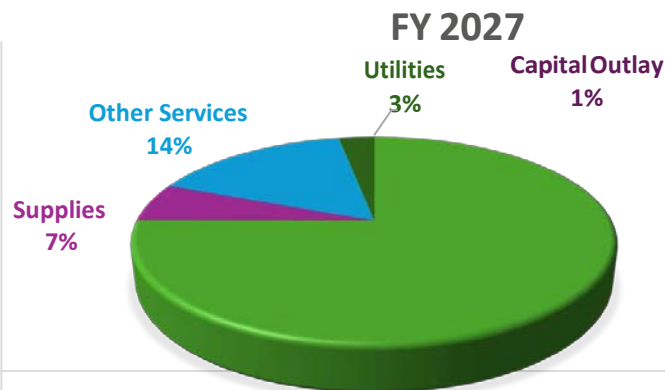
through FY2026. In FY2026, VIPD recovered 143 illegal firearms and effected 420 arrests.

In FY2025, the department expended \$16,525,268 in overtime. In FY2026 to date (July 23rd, 2026), the department expended \$14,305,917 in overtime. For this timeframe in FY2025, VIPD has remained steady in overtime expenditures with expenses at \$14,032,632. At the current rate, we anticipate expending \$15,642,244 at the end of FY2026 which represents a 5% decrease in comparison to last year.

Budget Overview and Impact

VIPD's Fiscal Year 2027 General Fund Budget aligns with the Office of Management and Budget's recommended budget of \$73,627,222.54:

Personnel	\$40,345,456.00
Fringe	\$15,445,476.00
Supplies	\$ 4,037,515.00
Other Services	\$11,779,540.00
Utilities	\$ 1,801,186.00
Capital Outlay	\$ 217,050.00



Specific Allocations are included for:

Police Activities League STT/STJ	\$65,000
Police Activities League STX	\$65,000
Cadet STT/STJ Program	\$65,000
Cadet STX Program	\$65,000
Weed & Seed STT/STJ	\$65,000
Weed & Seed STX	\$65,000
Consent Decree	\$1,654,539
Crime Stoppers	\$100,000
Peace Officer Standards Training (P.O.S.T.)	350,000

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.

Federal Grants

In FY2026, we executed the 2 remaining open projects totaling \$3,015,312: The Real Time Intelligence Center Personnel Project for \$616,378 and the VIPD Anti-Crime Initiatives for \$2,398,934 of which \$566,890 has been expended for the In-car Solution contract. We plan to encumber \$514,925 for the purchase of additional cameras and License Plate Readers, \$404,307 for the execution of the Red Light Camera System, and \$912,811.44 for the launch of the Drone program by the end of this fiscal year. We also

plan to utilize \$18,331,861 in federal grants to supplement the General Fund. In FY2026 we received \$6,253,110 from the United States Department of Justice – Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Program to fund the salaries of 30 new police officers and \$56,070 from the Law Enforcement Planning Commission to fund training for School Resource Officers aimed at enhancing school safety. The VIPD has also accumulated \$139,345 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. The department received \$85,000 in fiscal year 2023 and \$54,345 in fiscal year 2024. The department also has multi-year funding in the amounts of: \$3,967,740 from the United States Department of Justice – Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Program to fund the salaries of new police officers, of which \$746,687 has been expended. \$152,500 in Homeland Security grant funds have been fully expended for Type III Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) training & Advanced Hostage Rescue Tactics (HRT) training, which resulted in 19 certified officers. \$50,000 in Homeland Security grant funds assisted with the upcoming election process. We received \$1.5M from the United States Department of the Interior- Office of Insular Affairs for the expansion of surveillance cameras, all of

which have been expended. We received \$2,000,000 for the Real Time Intelligence Center project, of which \$381,692 has been expended and \$459,576 is encumbered. We secured \$3,984,000 for the buildout of 3 law enforcement vessels that are currently in the bidding process. We obtained \$229,096 from the Law Enforcement Planning Commission in prior year funding to support Community Policing, of which \$94,095 has been expended and the remaining \$135,000 is allotted License Plate Readers.

Virgin Islands Office of Highway Safety

In FY2026, the Virgin Islands Office of Highway Safety (VIOHS) received \$1,646,766 from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to fund 10 projects. The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) awarded the Department \$1,202,194 which will fund 2 federal grants through September 30th, 2027. At the end of FY2026, any unused NHTSA fund balances will also roll forward to FY2027. The VIOHS does not anticipate any de-obligation of FMCSA funds as a no-cost six-month extension has been requested for the award which was scheduled to end September 30, 2026.

FEMA/Hazard Mitigation

The VIPD received \$12,872,869 in FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program

89 (HMGP) funding for various disaster relief projects. The Virgin Islands Police
90 Department continues to advance FEMA Hazard Mitigation and Public
91 Assistance projects to restore and strengthen police facilities across the
92 Territory. During FY2026, priority projects include the Alexander A. Farrelly
93 Justice Center, Leander Jurgen Command Retrofit, and the St. Croix
94 Surveillance Camera Project, while the St. Thomas/St. John Surveillance
95 Camera Project is being prepared for re- solicitation. FEMA-funded
96 restoration of the Evidence Storage Warehouse and Forensic Operations
97 Building is substantially complete and nearing closeout. The Department also
98 continues to coordinate with FEMA on the Patrick Sweeney Headquarters
99 Retrofit, which remains in the appeals process. Projects that are no
100 longer feasible have been responsibly withdrawn or de-obligated to ensure
101 FEMA resources remain aligned with operational priorities. The VIPD has
102 successfully completed and closed out three significant FEMA-funded
103 projects in full compliance with FEMA policies and procedures. These
104 projects include the St. Thomas Impound Lot Repair and Retrofit
105 Project, with a total Public Assistance award of \$89,296.46; the Bassanio
106 David Command Repair and Retrofit Project, with a total Public Assistance

award of \$423,873.74; and the Backup Wireless Hotspots Project, with a total FEMA award of \$94,631.00. Collectively, these projects represent more than \$607,800 in federal investment to VIPD infrastructure.

In addition, we have completed the core buildout of the Real Time Intelligence Centers in both districts which will enhance intelligence capabilities and support more effective public safety operations.

Consent Decree

The Virgin Islands Police Department have achieved substantial compliance with all the remaining paragraphs of the consent decree. The Citizen Complaints section of the Consent Decree was terminated on April 6, 2026 which leaves the Use of Force and Management and Supervision sections of the CD which are also now 6 months into the two-year monitoring stage since the substantial compliance has been achieved. The VIPD, IMT, and the U.S. Department of Justice remain committed to continue to utilize best police practices in policing in the advancement of the agency.

Human Resources

During FY2026, the Virgin Islands Police Department hired 25 employees territorially. Also, the Department recorded 33 employee separations, consisting of 21 sworn personnel and 12 civilian employees.

The Department currently has 19 General Fund vacancies and 40

127 federally funded vacancies, for a total of 59 vacancies. Currently, five (5)
128 General Fund positions are being actively advertised, two (2) positions are
129 (pending interviews, and eight (8) additional positions have
130 been submitted to the Office of Management and Budget for funding
131 approval. The Human Resources Division also played a key role in
132 implementing the Government's \$35,000 minimum salary increase,
133 which became effective October 1st, 2025. To ensure compliance with
134 the new compensation requirements, the Division processed 10
135 personnel actions affecting employees whose salaries fell below the new
136 minimum threshold. These actions were completed in coordination with the
137 Division of Personnel and Payroll to ensure eligible employees received the
138 required salary adjustments accurately and in a timely manner.

139 The Human Resources Division continues to foster employee
140 advancement and leadership development in partnership with the Division
141 of Personnel. During FY2026, the Division successfully administered the
142 Police Captain and Lieutenant promotional examinations, while the
143 Police Sergeant promotional examination was opened and is scheduled to be
144 administered in October 2026. These promotional efforts have strengthened
145 the Department's leadership structure. As a result, three Lieutenants from
146 each district was promoted to the rank of Captain, and two Police Lieutenant
147 candidates in the St. Croix District are awaiting their promotional ceremony.

148 During the fiscal year, the Human Resources Division implemented
149 employee recognition and wellness initiatives designed to strengthen
150 employee engagement and morale.

Looking ahead, the Department faces an ongoing workforce challenge. Ninety-five (95) employees are currently eligible for retirement. Although retirement eligibility does not necessarily mean all employees will retire during this fiscal year, these figures underscore the significant level of experience that could be lost over time. To support the Department's future staffing needs, the Human Resources Division has processed 107 applicants for the 2026 Police Recruit Classes across the territory.

Like many law enforcement agencies throughout the United States, the Virgin Islands Police Department continues to face significant challenges in recruiting qualified candidates for law enforcement positions.

Increased competition among agencies, changing workforce expectations, and a declining number of individuals pursuing careers in policing have made recruiting and retaining qualified officers more challenging than in previous years.

The Department's Communications Office is expanding its recruitment campaign through increased social media engagement, targeted digital advertising, radio advertisements, billboards, micro-advertising campaigns, and other multimedia platforms to increase public awareness of career opportunities within the Virgin Islands Police Department.

The Department has also rolled out an Employee Applicant Referral Incentive Program to encourage current employees to assist in recruiting qualified candidates.

Community Affairs

The Office of Community Affairs continues to strengthen relationships between the Virgin Islands Police Department and the community through youth development, crime prevention, and community engagement initiatives. The Police Cadet Leadership and Development Program prepared young men and women for careers in law enforcement and public service, with 21 cadets graduating in June 2026. Following the graduation, several cadets expressed interest in joining the Department's Community Service Officer (CSO) Program.

The Police Activities League (PAL) Summer Camp provided a safe and engaging environment for more than 100 youths across both districts during its six-week program, offering educational, recreational, athletic, and character-building activities that strengthened relationships between youth and law enforcement.

Building on these initiatives, the office is preparing to host its inaugural PAL and Weed and Seed Baseball Tournament, bringing together youth from the US and British Virgin Islands to promote teamwork, sportsmanship, and positive community engagement. In conjunction with the tournament, the office will also feature a Community Fun Day, launch of a Girls Flag Football League, and continue to integrate partnerships with various

housing communities across the territory. The Office of Community Affairs remains committed to crime prevention initiatives through the expansion of youth programs.

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) standards. During FY2026, approximately 2700 hours of instruction were delivered in Peace Officer Certifications and Officer Development. 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.

Other critical training conducted included Scenario Base Trainings, Building Entry and Special Response Team Certification Training. The Training Bureau also trained and certified sworn and civilian personnel in Mental Health First Aid.

Information Technology Bureau

This year, the department achieved numerous accomplishments that underscore our ongoing commitment to innovation and public safety. The

renewal of the MOA for the e-citation project is in the final approval stage.

We successfully completed the Phase II camera project in the St. Thomas-St. John district, which has significantly strengthened our surveillance capabilities. On St. Croix, the installation of the PTZ cameras is nearing completion. We are also proactively pursuing additional funding to expand our surveillance infrastructure.

Equipment installation for the In-Car Mobile Routing Solution project is ongoing and is 90 percent completed across the territory. This enhancement enables officers to securely access internet and network resources from their vehicles, while leadership can now monitor vehicle GPS locations in real time. The expansion of this capability is currently underway for the RTIC and 911 dispatchers. This has led to greater operational efficiency and improved emergency response. We completed the installation of a License Plate Recognition(LPR) system at major intersections across the territory. After rigorous testing and feedback from a core team of users, the system has already delivered significant benefits to sworn personnel. Plans are underway to expand this successful project further enhancing public

safety. Another key accomplishment was integrating our CCTVs, LPRs and gun detection system alerts into the RTIC. This advancement empowers our real-time intelligence staff with streamlined access to critical information, resulting in faster response times and more effective support for sworn personnel in the field. Several of our local businesses have successfully registered and joined The VIPD Community Connect Program. In addition, to the VIPD Community Connect Program, the department is in the process of upgrading its existing Body Worn Cameras. This and other technological enhancements will further promote accountability and transparency within our operations.

Facilities Management

The Virgin Islands Police Department continues to advance its long-term facilities modernization strategy through targeted capital improvement projects and proactive facilities management. The Alexander A. Farrelly Justice Center Retrofit Repair Project is nearing completion of the 100% design phase, with solicitation anticipated before the end of calendar year 2026. The Patrick E. Sweeney Headquarters Retrofit Project remains in the

FEMA appeal process following the initial appeal denial, and the Department continues to work with FEMA and VITEMA as that process moves forward.

In the St. Croix District, construction of the Department's new Police Operations Headquarters continues to progress. While the facility was originally scheduled for completion in June 2026, the anticipated completion date has shifted to December 2026, with occupancy planned for early Spring 2027. Importantly, this construction delay has resulted in no additional lease cost to the Virgin Islands Police Department.

During the past fiscal year, the Facilities Management Division has significantly strengthened its internal maintenance capabilities. The Department now has trained EPA-certified and licensed HVAC technicians, allowing air conditioning repairs and preventive maintenance activities to be performed in-house, reducing contractor dependence and improving response times.

Looking ahead, the Department's strategic objective is to reduce its long-term reliance on leased facilities by acquiring and developing permanent

government-owned properties where feasible. Complementing this initiative is the implementation of a centralized Facilities Work Order Management System (WOMS), which will improve accountability, establish preventive maintenance schedules, track repairs, and extend the service life of Department facilities. Together, these initiatives are expected to reduce operating costs, minimize emergency repairs, improve workplace conditions, and lower the Department's overall lease obligations over time.

Conclusion

In closing, we thank you for the opportunity to present our FY2027 budget request, providing a transparent overview of our achievements, numerous 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 our CFO Mrs. Florence Clercent and CSO Ms. Candy Wattley as our Employees of the Year. Both employees have performed above and beyond our expectations and we are grateful to have them as a part of our team. To my executive team, thank you for answering the call to service and dedication to leading this department. I cannot do it

281 without you. To the entire VIPD family, sworn and civilian
282 personnel alike we say thank you, thank you, thank you, for what you
283 do every day for the people of this territory. At this time, I would like to invite
284 everyone to join me in a moment of silence to honor our fallen officer,
285 Eustace Charles. This concludes my testimony, my team and I are ready
286 to respond to your questions.