

1 **35th LEGISLATURE OF THE U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS**
2 **SENATOR DONNA A. FRETT-GREGORY**
3 **COMMITTEE ON BUDGET, APPROPRIATION & FINANCE**
4 **VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT**
5 **FY2024 BUDGET TESTIMONY**
6 **JUNE 27, 2023**

7
8 **Good afternoon - Honorable Senator Donna A. Frett-Gregory**

9 **- Chair of the Committee on Budget, Appropriation and Finance -**

10 **Committee Members, other members of the 35th Legislature,**
11 **members of my Executive Team, listening and viewing audience...**

12 **People of the United States Virgin Islands. I am Commissioner Ray**

13 **Anthony Martinez, pleased to lead the United States Virgin Islands**

14 **Police Department (VIPD). I appear before you with the goal of**

15 **presenting the department's Fiscal Year 2024 Budget. I have and**

16 **continue to strive towards setting standards and internal financial**

17 **controls to better navigate being fiscally responsible. This, of**

18 **course, comes with challenges. Challenges we are always willing to**

19 **address head-on. Thank you for the opportunity to appear and**

20 **discuss our proposed Fiscal Year 2024 budget. Like my countless**

21 **appearances before this body in various capacities, I will be**

22 forthright, and clear on what I say. And I know you will do the
23 same.

24 No leader does it alone. I am therefore joined by members of
25 my executive team who are here to compliment and support me in
26 presenting this budget. To my Team, thank you for being here.
27 More importantly, I thank the police officers and civilian
28 employees, the backbone of the department for their continued
29 service and commitment to the VIPD and our community.

30

31 **VIPD's recommended Fiscal Year FY2024 Budget is**
32 **\$75,528,688. The Budget consists of the General Fund**
33 **Operating Budget of \$74,291,834** which includes funding for:

34 ❖ Personnel Services of \$40,666,030 and Fringe Benefits of
35 \$15,412,790 for a total Personnel Cost of \$56,078,820 This
36 accounts for 75% of the budget.

37 ❖ Supplies of \$4,938,298 and Other Services of \$11,113,400 for
38 a total Other Operating Costs of \$16,051,698

39 ❖ Utilities of \$2,111,316

40 ❖ Capital Outlay of \$50,000

41 **Also included in the General Fund Budget is funding**
42 **for:**

43 ❖ St. Thomas Police Activities League, \$40,000

44 ❖ St. Croix Police Activities League, \$40,000

45 ❖ St. Thomas Weed and Seed Program, \$90,000

46 ❖ St. Croix Weed and Seed Program, \$90,000

47 ❖ Consent Decree \$1,826,694; and

48 ❖ Crime Stoppers, \$100,000

49 The Department also receives an annual appropriation of
50 \$850,000 from the Tourism Advertising Revolving Fund. These
51 monies supplement the VIPD's Tourism Oriented Policing
52 initiative and fund delivery of tourism loss prevention, safety,
53 and security services. Non-appropriated funds of \$386,854 are
54 allocated towards the Peace Officers Standards and Training
55 (POST) office. POST is currently funded through appropriations
56 from the Bureau of Motor Vehicles and the Superior Court.

57 **CONSENT DECREE**

58 In FY2023, the Department expended \$1,192,585 on the
59 Consent Decree (CD) to include \$541,833.19 in Independent
60 Monitor (IMT) costs. The Department now has a new monitoring
61 team appointed in November of 2022. Since being appointed the
62 IMT conducted interviews with personnel – including Executive
63 Management, Commanders, frontline supervisors, and officers, to
64 assess compliance status, and efforts of the department. As the IMT
65 continues to assess and conduct reviews for substantial
66 compliance, the department has the utmost confidence that these
67 reviews will reveal an improved department. While we still have
68 work to do, we will continue to constitutionally police our
69 community through the implementation of sound policies and
70 continuous training. FY 2024 funding will ensure we continue
71 moving towards attaining substantial compliance that will remove
72 us from under the Consent Decree.

73 **HUMAN RESOURCES**

74 The Office of Human Resources has witnessed a remarkable
75 surge in applications for the positions of Police Officers and

76 Auxiliary Officers which is indicative of the enthusiasm and
77 dedication of individuals who are eager to serve and protect our
78 community. Through our robust recruiting plan, in the past few
79 months we have received and are processing approximately 50
80 applications. In addition, less than a week ago, we held an Open
81 House on St. Croix where 29 applicants obtained information and
82 applications. It is our responsibility to seize the opportunity...
83 capitalize on this momentum by attracting the most talented and
84 passionate candidates to join our ranks.

85 Currently there are 28 Peace Officer recruits and 14 Auxiliary
86 Recruits in the Police Academy, of which 13 fulltime officers will
87 join VIPD – 4 for the St. Croix District and 9 for the St. Thomas
88 District. Each District will have 7 Auxiliary Officers. Upon
89 completion and graduation, another Peace Officer Class is
90 scheduled to begin in early FY2024.

91 Other initiatives include significant progress made in
92 establishing a Police Cadet program in collaboration with local high
93 schools. The draft MOU with the Department of Education is under

94 review, and the shared excitement over the program’s potential will
95 have a positive impact on the community; aiming to capture the
96 interest of high school students who have a passion for law
97 enforcement. The program’s blueprint and driving force will be the
98 curriculum which is currently being developed aligning with the
99 department’s goals and objectives.

100 By re-introducing the Police Cadet program, we aim to engage
101 and nurture, create early exposure to the field, allow gained
102 insights, develop critical skills, build a strong foundation for their
103 future careers, and contribute to a more diverse and talented pool
104 of applicants for the positions of Police Officer and Auxiliary
105 Officer.

106 **TRAINING BUREAU**

107 Funding for the Training Bureau (TB) ensures that all peace
108 officers in the territory maintain certification requirements
109 according to Peace Officer Standards and Training. During
110 FY2023, approximately 700 POST certified law enforcement
111 officers received 2,990 hours of training. Instructions included

112 **Annual and Supplemental Training** for: Firearms
113 certifications, taser, baton, and Oleoresin Capsicum (OC)
114 Certification, Ethics, Use of Force (UOF), Domestic Violence (DV),
115 Auxiliary Officers transitioning from part-time to full-time officers
116 and Lateral Transfers from other agencies, Supervisors' liability,
117 and Power DMS (database).

118 Specialized training was also provided in Crime Scene
119 Processing, Mobile Phone and Digital Investigations, Advanced
120 Stages of Human Body Decomposition, and Interpersonal
121 Communication Training for Supervisors and Civilian Staff.
122 Eligible Officers for promotion received leadership and
123 accountability training. Approval of our budget as requested
124 provides the opportunity to continue providing a-one training for
125 all law enforcement.

126 **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY BUREAU**

127 VIPD is becoming a smarter agency as technology continues
128 to aid in increasing operational efficiency and especially during
129 investigations. We have used technology to augment our limited

130 manpower. The acquisition of artificial intelligence technology,
131 digital forensics and project support, and specialized investigative
132 equipment have been instrumental in closing cases by arrest and
133 strengthening prosecutions.

134 The VIPD Information Technology Bureau has maintained
135 the mission of supporting and implementing a range of
136 technologies with security tools to aide with providing technical
137 support and automation.

138 The Spillman Records Management System has been
139 configured and operating in real-time. Personnel are presently
140 uploading and inputting past records in order to expand the
141 system's capabilities. Our IT staff has also conducted training with
142 other law enforcement agencies and they too are now able to utilize
143 the system to document incidents. The Spillman GPS location tool
144 is operational in the Traffic vehicles that are connected to the
145 network with the mobile routing solution. The system will be
146 expanded after the contract for the in-car mobile solution is
147 completed.

148 VIPD has been utilizing the current video surveillance system
149 as a tool to assist with incidents in the territory. The DOI's funding
150 of the second phase deployment of cameras contract language is
151 being finalized. The project is set to begin installation of the
152 cameras by September 2023. The third phase of the video
153 surveillance expansion is presently in the approval stage.

154 The vision for a Territorial Real-Time Crime Center has taken
155 root. Thanks to Governor Bryan and Director O'Neal, funding has
156 been procured. A technical assistance team will be on the island in
157 three weeks to aid in the process. A pilot Real-Time Center utilizing
158 camera and digital technology was set up during the carnival events
159 in April. The RTCC served as a central hub for collecting, analyzing,
160 and disseminating real-time information to our personnel,
161 enabling them to respond swiftly and efficiently to emerging
162 incidents. We deemed the Center to be a success thus leading us
163 into the transition from dream to reality for this much needed
164 asset. The Center provided coverage, monitoring, and feedback to
165 the officers in the field. The system proved highly effective leading

166 to firearms and illegal narcotics arrests. It has also provided key
167 information of evidentiary value on violent crimes.

168 We are also working with the Superior Court on the process of
169 designing the electronic ticket solution. While the electronic ticket
170 solution RTCC, and other projects are primarily federally funded,
171 continued funding of MIS projects in FY2024 will ensure VIPD
172 continues to remain current with policing technological trends.

173 **COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC INFORMATION**

174 The VIPD's Office of Communications and Public Information
175 continues to play a very integral role in day-to-day operations by
176 advising the Commissioner and the command staff on public
177 opinion and news media response regarding departmental
178 outreach and issues. Its strong focus is on building lasting
179 collaborative relationships between local police and the public
180 through problem-solving partnerships, initiatives, and community
181 events.

182 The goal in FY2024 remains to continue providing timely
183 dissemination of information to the public; while continuing to

184 embrace the use of social media and technology to effectively
185 inform the community of crimes, criminal arrests, and other
186 information pertinent to public safety. The VIPD'S Social Media
187 presence on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram has increased
188 tremendously and has become an essential tool in communication
189 and police media relations throughout the territory.

190 With the recent implementation of systems such as
191 Everbridge - an emergency notification system that delivers fast,
192 relevant alerts during an emergency or an ongoing crisis situation
193 - VIPD is currently utilizing this emergency notification solution.
194 This system provides the community with instant information
195 during an emergency or times of crisis such as Amber and Silver
196 Alerts, BOLO's, wanted individuals, and traffic advisories. It allows
197 for mass messaging via phone, SMS text, and email simultaneously
198 or by a preferred platform per message. Much more is in-store from
199 the VIPD Media Team to include implementation of VIPD Podcast.

200 **FACILITIES MANAGEMENT**

201 The Virgin Islands Police Department currently occupies over
202 twenty-one (21) properties housing over 475 employees,
203 equipment, and services. There are eleven (11) rental leases, five (5)
204 storage units; and nine (9) MOUs that are all pending further
205 review. Rental costs for both districts total \$1,473,180.

206 While we have been able to complete minor repairs to some
207 locations, several of our buildings still require major repairs
208 because of Hurricanes Irma and Maria. To address these issues, we
209 continue to work closely with the Office of Disaster Recovery and
210 FEMA. We have since requested additional assistance for the cost
211 of temporary relocations and are awaiting FEMA's response.

212 In our efforts to provide safe and comfortable working conditions
213 for our employees, we are currently working with the Department
214 of Property and Procurement to identify and secure additional
215 office space suitable to facilitate our infrastructure needs and
216 requirements. We have also communicated these concerns with the
217 Office of the Governor and the Office of Management and Budget
218 as well. While we are moving forward post haste to obtain and

219 execute new leases, we understand our rental budget will need to
220 increase. Costs for all these moves are not available now; therefore,
221 the plan is to make the necessary moves and cover those costs in
222 the FY2024 Supplemental Budget request.

223 **FEDERAL GRANTS**

224 We plan to utilize Federal grants in the amount of
225 \$22,069,039 to augment the General Fund. The United States
226 Department of Justice – Community Oriented Policing Services
227 (COPS) Program continues to fund the personnel costs of new
228 police officers. The Department is utilizing 2020 COPS grant funds
229 in the amount of \$2,144,180 to fund the salaries of 12 police
230 officers. Currently, we have 11 filled positions and anticipate the
231 next vacancy will be filled in the upcoming police class. This grant
232 expires in June of 2024. Upon expiration of the grant the positions
233 will be transferred over to the General Fund.

234 The VIPD has accumulated \$1,723,549 in Operation Stone
235 Garden (OSG) grant funding from the United States Department of
236 Homeland Security/Customs Border Patrol. These grants continue

237 to fund the purchase of equipment and supplies in addition to
238 overtime, fuel, and maintenance of vehicles and vessels used to
239 patrol the territory's coastline and borders. Escalating fuel prices
240 have strained law enforcement budgets, impacting overall
241 operational efficiency however Stone Garden eases that strain on
242 the General Fund.

243 The 2019 Stone Garden funding of \$738,549 provided
244 overtime, fuel and maintenance reimbursement in the amount of
245 \$332,994 and furnished 1 additional patrol vessel for the district of
246 St. Croix at the cost of \$377,355. The vessel should be in the
247 Territory within the next month.

248 The 2020 Stone Garden funding, in the amount of \$800,000,
249 will allow for an overtime reimbursement request in the amount of
250 \$397,223.79. The remainder of the grant funding has been
251 airmarked for the purchase of a patrol vessel for the St. Thomas/St.
252 John district at the cost of \$377,335.

253 For the second funding cycle in a row, natural disasters on the
254 U.S. mainland and issues along the Southwestern U.S. border,

255 federal funding was diverted to assist with deployment; thus,
256 resulting in the VIPD receiving only \$100,000 in 2021 Stone
257 Garden funding and \$85,000 in 2022 Stone Garden funding. This
258 funding has been used for its intended purpose of augmenting
259 overtime for border patrol initiatives. We have been in
260 conversations with Stone Garden executives in Puerto Rico
261 advocating for increased funding. With the Southern Border being
262 closely scrutinized, the Caribbean corridor has become much more
263 active requiring us to increase our initiatives.

264 We also received Homeland Security grant funds in the
265 amount of \$52,600 for the purchase of additional surveillance
266 security systems to protect soft target locations territory wide.

267 Through the United States Department of the Interior-Office
268 of Insular Affairs, VIPD received a \$1.5M Capital Improvement
269 Project (CIP) for the expansion of surveillance cameras throughout
270 the Territory. The Department recently met with the Bureau of
271 Information Technology and the vendor to finalize the terms of the
272 contract amendment and are eagerly awaiting its ratification.

273 The Department also received \$85,830 for the Maintenance
274 Assistance Program (MAP) Specialized Equipment, Tools, and
275 Training project for the purchase of equipment for both Motor
276 Pools. The Department encumbered the funds to purchase a variety
277 of critical service and repair equipment to aid in the maintenance
278 and upkeep of our vehicular fleet. We anticipate their arrival in the
279 next 30 days. In addition, we are proceeding with the final
280 obligation under the grant to train the Motor Pool on the proper
281 use and maintenance of the newly acquired equipment.

282 The Department continues to pursue additional grant
283 opportunities and recently received an additional \$426,415 from
284 the Law Enforcement Planning Commission in FY2023 funding.
285 This funding covers the revitalization of the Police Activities
286 League program, tactical gear for sworn personnel in both districts
287 and training for School Resource Officers.

288 **OFFICE OF HIGHWAY SAFETY**

289 In FY2023, the Office of Highway Safety had 16 National
290 Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) projects totaling

291 \$3,212,915 and one Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration
292 (FMCSA) project at \$576,587. These projects include Occupant
293 Protection; Police Traffic Services; Impaired Driving; Traffic
294 Records Strategic Plan Development; DOH-EMS Trauma Registry;
295 Scientific Seatbelt Survey; and the Traffic Records E-Citation
296 software installation project.

297 **FEMA/HAZARD MITIGATION**

298 The VIPD received a sum of \$12,999,354 in FEMA Hazard
299 Mitigation funding. The Hazard Mitigation Grant Program
300 (HMGP) disaster relief projects continue to progress forward.
301 \$94,631 of funding was designated for wireless back-up hotspots.
302 These hotspots are to improve connectivity during disasters. The
303 tripods were received, and personnel trained on their deployment.
304 The project is now in the close-out process where \$94,030.11 was
305 expended. \$600.89 will be de-obligated upon closing out.

306 Our generator projects are ongoing. There is \$44,340 for the
307 St. Croix Motor pool. Additionally, there is \$226,584 to purchase
308 and install generators for the St. Croix and St. Thomas Training

309 Academies. We recently received the designs which are currently
310 under review.

311 The Department received \$253,395 for the Leander Jurgen
312 Command Hurricane Wind Retrofit project. This funding will allow
313 for retrofitting the facility to meet hazard mitigation standards.
314 Unfortunately, the Jurgen Command project was delayed for much
315 of FY2023 in the Architectural & Engineering phase but is now
316 moving forward with the completion of the as-built drawings that
317 were needed.

318 VIPD was also awarded \$12,348,549 for the Patrick Sweeney
319 Headquarters Retrofit Project. Geotechnical engineering and
320 environmental studies on the existing structure have now been
321 completed. Therefore, we are now moving forward with the
322 project's conceptual design phase. As per the award approval letter:
323 Phase I funding is authorized in the amount of \$2,135,674.90,
324 which includes \$80,288.53 for Sub-Recipient management costs.
325 Phase I funding is hereby obligated in the amount of \$895,000.00
326 for Phase I initial architecture and engineering activities, in

327 accordance with the approved Strategic Funds Management
328 schedule.

329 The Department has received total FEMA reimbursement in
330 the amount of \$14,600,031 from obligated Project Worksheets
331 (PWs). \$14,366,948 is for Hurricanes Irma and Maria PWs and
332 \$233,083 from Covid19 PWs. An additional draw of \$1,098,725 is
333 expected by the end of this week. These reimbursements cover
334 overtime, vehicle repairs and fuel, generator fuel and maintenance,
335 repairs to facilities and signage.

336 **CONCLUSION**

337 Honorable Senator Donna A. Frett-Gregory and members of
338 this body, thank you for giving us the opportunity today. To the
339 entire VIPD family thank you for your unwavering support. To the
340 people of the Virgin Islands, you play an integral role in helping the
341 department solve crimes as our eyes and ears; you help us shine,
342 thank you. My team and I stand ready to answer your questions.