

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 **AUGUST 4, 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 **A. Martinez, pleased to lead the United States Virgin Islands Police**

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

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

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

17 **better navigate being fiscally responsible. This, of course, comes**

18 **with challenges. Challenges we are always willing to address head-**

19 **on. Thank you for the opportunity to appear and discuss our**

20 **proposed Fiscal Year 2024 budget. Like my countless appearances**

21 before this body in various capacities, I will be forthright, and clear
22 on what I say. And I know you will do the same.

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

29 **VIPD's recommended Fiscal Year FY2024 Budget is**
30 **\$75,528,688. The Budget consists of the General Fund**
31 **Operating Budget of \$74,291,834** which includes funding for:

32 ❖ Personnel Services of \$40,666,030 and Fringe Benefits of
33 \$15,412,790 for a total Personnel Cost of \$56,078,820 This
34 accounts for 75% of the budget.

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

37 ❖ Utilities of \$2,111,316

38 ❖ Capital Outlay of \$50,000

39 **Also included in the General Fund Budget is funding**
40 **for:**

41 ❖ St. Thomas Police Activities League, \$39,000

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

43 ❖ St. Thomas Weed and Seed Program, \$91,000

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

45 ❖ Consent Decree \$1,826,694; and

46 ❖ Crime Stoppers, \$100,000

47 The Department also receives an annual appropriation of
48 \$850,000 from the Tourism Advertising Revolving Fund. These
49 monies supplement the VIPD's Tourism Oriented Policing
50 initiative and fund delivery of tourism loss prevention, safety,
51 and security services. Non-appropriated funds of \$386,854 are
52 allocated towards the Peace Officers Standards and Training
53 (POST) office. POST is funded through appropriations from the
54 Bureau of Motor Vehicles and the Superior Court.

55 **CONSENT DECREE**

56 In FY2023, the Department expended \$1,453,189 on the
57 Consent Decree (CD) to include \$541,833 in Independent Monitor
58 (IMT) costs. The Department now has a new monitoring team
59 appointed in November of 2022. Since being appointed the IMT
60 conducted interviews with personnel – including Executive
61 Management, Commanders, frontline supervisors, and officers, to
62 assess compliance status, and efforts of the department. As the IMT
63 continues to assess and conduct reviews for substantial
64 compliance, the department has the utmost confidence that these
65 reviews will reveal an improved department. While we still have
66 work to do, we will continue to constitutionally police our
67 community through the implementation of sound policies and
68 continuous training. FY 2024 funding will ensure we continue
69 moving towards attaining substantial compliance that will remove
70 us from under the Consent Decree.

71 **HUMAN RESOURCES**

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

74 Auxiliary Officers which is indicative of the enthusiasm and
75 dedication of individuals who are eager to serve and protect our
76 community. Over the past few months, we have received and are
77 processing approximately fifty applications and distributed an
78 additional twenty-nine application packages at open houses. We
79 intend to capitalize on this momentum by attracting the most
80 talented and enthusiastic candidates to join our ranks.

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

87 Other initiatives include considerable progress in establishing
88 a Police Cadet program in collaboration with local high schools.
89 The draft MOU with the Department of Education is under review,
90 and there is shared excitement the program's potential will have a
91 positive impact on the community; aiming to capture the interest

92 of high school students who have a passion for law enforcement.
93 The program's blueprint and driving force will be the curriculum
94 which is currently under development aligning with the
95 department's goals and objectives.

96 **TRAINING BUREAU**

97 Funding for the Training Bureau (TB) ensures that all peace
98 officers in the territory maintain certification requirements
99 according to Peace Officer Standards and Training. During
100 FY2023, approximately 700 POST certified law enforcement
101 officers received 2,990 hours of training. Instructions included
102 Annual and Supplemental Training in Firearms certifications,
103 taser, baton, and Oleoresin Capsicum (OC) Certification, Ethics,
104 Use of Force (UOF), Domestic Violence (DV), Auxiliary Officers
105 transitioning from part-time to full-time officers and Lateral
106 Transfers from other agencies, Supervisors' liability, and Power
107 DMS (database).

108 Specialized training was also provided in Crime Scene
109 Processing, Mobile Phone and Digital Investigations, Advanced

110 Stages of Human Body Decomposition, and Interpersonal
111 Communication Training for Supervisors and Civilian Staff.
112 Officers eligible for promotion received leadership and
113 accountability training. Approval of our budget as requested
114 provides the opportunity to continue providing A-one training for
115 all law enforcement.

116 **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY BUREAU**

117 VIPD is becoming a smarter agency as technology continues
118 to aid in increasing operational efficiency and especially during
119 investigations. We have used technology to augment our limited
120 workforce. The acquisition of artificial intelligence technology,
121 digital forensics and investigative project support, and specialized
122 investigative equipment have been instrumental in closing cases by
123 arrest and strengthening prosecutions.

124 The VIPD Information Technology Bureau has maintained
125 the mission of supporting and implementing a range of
126 technologies along with security tools to aide with providing
127 technical support and automation.

128 The Spillman Records Management System has been
129 configured and operates in real-time. Personnel are presently
130 uploading and inputting past records to expand the system’s
131 capabilities. Our IT staff has also conducted training with other law
132 enforcement agencies and they too are now able to utilize the
133 system to document incidents. The Spillman GPS location tool is
134 operational in the Traffic Investigation vehicles that are connected
135 to the network through a mobile routing solution. The system will
136 be expanded to our new fleet after the contract for the in-car mobile
137 solution is completed.

138 The vision for a Territorial Real-Time Crime Center has taken
139 root. Thanks to Governor Bryan and OMB Director O’Neal, the
140 project is funded. A pilot Real-Time Center utilizing camera and
141 digital technology was set up during the STT carnival events in
142 April. The temporary RTCC served as a central hub for collecting,
143 analyzing, and disseminating real-time information to our
144 personnel, enabling them to respond swiftly and efficiently to
145 emerging incidents. The Center provided real-time coverage,

146 monitoring, and feedback to the officers in the field. The system
147 proved highly effective leading to firearms and illegal narcotics
148 arrests in and around Carnival festivities. It has also provided key
149 information of evidentiary value in a violent crime.

150 We are also working with the Superior Court on the process of
151 designing and implementing the long-awaited electronic ticket
152 solution (e-citation) as well as obtaining quotes for the “Green
153 Light Camera System.” While the electronic ticket solution, RTCC,
154 and other projects are primarily federally funded, continued
155 funding of MIS projects in FY2024 will ensure VIPD continues to
156 remain current with policing technological trends.

157 **COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC INFORMATION**

158 The VIPD’s Office of Communications and Public Information
159 continues to play a very integral role in day-to-day operations by
160 advising the Commissioner and the command staff on public
161 opinion and news media response regarding departmental
162 outreach and issues. Its strong focus is on building lasting
163 collaborative relationships between local police and the public

164 through problem-solving partnerships, initiatives, and community
165 events.

166 The goal in FY2024 remains to continue providing timely
167 dissemination of information to the public; while continuing to
168 embrace the use of social media and technology to effectively
169 inform the community of crimes, criminal arrests, and other
170 information pertinent to public safety. The VIPD'S Social Media
171 presence on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram has increased
172 tremendously and has become an essential tool in communication
173 and police media relations throughout the territory.

174 With the recent implementation of systems such as
175 Everbridge - an emergency notification system that delivers fast,
176 relevant alerts during an emergency or an ongoing crisis - VIPD is
177 currently utilizing this emergency notification solution. This
178 system provides the community with instant information during an
179 emergency or times of crisis such as Amber and Silver Alerts,
180 BOLO's, wanted individuals, and traffic advisories. It allows for

181 mass messaging via phone, SMS text, and email simultaneously or
182 by a preferred platform per message.

183 **FACILITIES MANAGEMENT**

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

189 While we have been able to complete minor repairs at some
190 locations, several of our buildings still require major repairs due to
191 Hurricanes Irma and Maria. To address these issues, we continue
192 to work closely with the Office of Disaster Recovery and FEMA. We
193 have since requested additional assistance for the cost of temporary
194 relocations and are awaiting FEMA's response.

195 In our efforts to provide safe and comfortable working conditions
196 for our employees, we are currently working with the Department
197 of Property and Procurement to identify and secure additional
198 office space suitable to facilitate our infrastructure needs and

199 requirements. We have also communicated these concerns with the
200 Office of the Governor and the Office of Management and Budget
201 as well. While we are moving post haste to obtain and execute new
202 leases, we understand our rental budget will need to increase
203 exponentially. Costs for these moves are not available now;
204 therefore, the plan is to cover the cost of those lease acquisitions in
205 the FY2024 Supplemental Budget request.

206 **FEDERAL GRANTS**

207 We plan to utilize Federal grants in the amount of
208 \$22,069,039 to augment the General Fund. The United States
209 Department of Justice – Community Oriented Policing Services
210 (COPS) Program continues to fund the personnel costs of new
211 police officers. The Department is utilizing 2020 COPS grant funds
212 in the amount of \$2,144,180 to fund the salaries of twelve police
213 officers. Currently, we have eleven filled positions and anticipate
214 the next vacancy will be filled in the upcoming police class. This
215 grant expires in June of 2024. Upon expiration of the grant the
216 positions will be transferred over to the General Fund.

217 The VIPD has accumulated \$1,723,549 in Operation Stone
218 Garden (OSG) grant funding from the United States Department of
219 Homeland Security/Customs Border Patrol. These grants continue
220 to fund the purchase of equipment and supplies in addition to
221 overtime, fuel, and maintenance of vehicles and vessels used to
222 patrol the territory's coastline and borders. Escalating fuel prices
223 have strained law enforcement budgets, impacting overall
224 operational efficiency however Stone Garden eases that strain on
225 the General Fund.

226 The 2019 Stone Garden funding of \$738,549 provided
227 overtime, fuel, and maintenance reimbursement in the amount of
228 \$332,994 and furnished one additional patrol vessel for the district
229 of St. Croix at the cost of \$377,355. The vessel arrived in the
230 Territory two weeks ago.

231 The 2020 Stone Garden funding, in the amount of \$800,000,
232 will allow for an overtime reimbursement request in the amount of
233 \$397,223.79. The remainder of the grant funding has been
234 airmarked for the purchase of a patrol vessel for the St. Thomas/St.

235 John district at the cost of \$377,335. The vessel is under
236 construction with an estimated completion date of September.

237 For the second funding cycle in a row, natural disasters on the
238 U.S. mainland and issues along the Southwestern U.S, border,
239 federal funding was diverted to assist with deployment; thus,
240 resulting in the VIPD receiving only \$100,000 in 2021 Stone
241 Garden funding and \$85,000 in 2022 Stone Garden funding. This
242 funding has been used for its intended purpose of augmenting
243 overtime for border patrol initiatives. We have been in
244 conversations with Stone Garden executives in Puerto Rico
245 advocating for increased funding. With the Southern Border being
246 closely scrutinized, the Caribbean corridor has become much more
247 active thus requiring us to increase our initiatives.

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

251 VIPD has been utilizing the current video surveillance and
252 license plate reader system as a tool to assist with investigations.

253 The DOI's \$1.5M funding of the second phase deployment of
254 cameras contract language is being finalized. The project is set to
255 begin installation of the cameras in November 2023. The third
256 phase of the video surveillance expansion is presently in the
257 approval stage.

258 The Department also received \$85,830 for the Maintenance
259 Assistance Program (MAP) Specialized Equipment, Tools, and
260 Training project for the purchase of equipment for both Motor
261 Pools. The Department has received a variety of critical
262 maintenance and repair equipment to aid in the upkeep of our
263 vehicular fleet. In addition, we are proceeding with the final
264 obligation under the grant to train the Motor Pool staff in the
265 proper use and maintenance of the newly acquired equipment.

266 The Department continues to pursue additional grant
267 opportunities and recently received an additional \$426,415 from
268 the Law Enforcement Planning Commission in FY2023 funding.
269 This funding covers the revitalization of the Police Activities

270 League program, tactical gear for sworn personnel in both districts
271 and training for School Resource Officers.

272 **OFFICE OF HIGHWAY SAFETY**

273 In FY2023, the Office of Highway Safety had 16 National
274 Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) projects totaling
275 \$3,212,915 and one Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration
276 (FMCSA) project at \$576,587. These projects include Occupant
277 Protection; Police Traffic Services; Impaired Driving; Traffic
278 Records Strategic Plan Development; DOH-EMS Trauma Registry;
279 Scientific Seatbelt Survey; and the Traffic Records E-Citation
280 software installation project.

281 **FEMA/HAZARD MITIGATION**

282 The VIPD received a sum of \$12,999,354 in FEMA Hazard
283 Mitigation funding. The Hazard Mitigation Grant Program
284 (HMGP) disaster relief projects continue to progress forward.
285 \$94,631 of funding designated for wireless back-up hotspots that
286 improve connectivity during disasters was allotted. The project is
287 now in the close-out process where \$94,030.11 was expended.

288 Our generator projects are ongoing. There is \$44,340 for the
289 St. Croix Motor pool. Additionally, there is \$226,584 to purchase
290 and install generators for the St. Croix and St. Thomas Training
291 Academies. We recently received the designs which are currently
292 under review.

293 The Department received \$253,395 for the Leander Jurgen
294 Command Hurricane Wind Retrofit project. This funding will allow
295 for retrofitting the facility to meet hazard mitigation standards.
296 Unfortunately, the Jurgen Command project was delayed for much
297 of FY2023 in the Architectural & Engineering phase but is now
298 moving forward with the completion of the as-built drawings that
299 were needed.

300 VIPD was also awarded \$12,348,549 for the Patrick Sweeney
301 Headquarters Retrofit Project. Geotechnical engineering and
302 environmental studies on the existing structure are completed and
303 the first conceptual design rendering has been received. As per the
304 award approval letter: Phase I funding is authorized in the amount
305 of \$2,135,674.90, which includes \$80,288.53 for Sub-Recipient

306 management costs. Phase I funding has been obligated in the
307 amount of \$895,000.00 for the Phase I initial architecture and
308 engineering activities, in accordance with the approved Strategic
309 Funds Management schedule.

310 The Department received a total FEMA reimbursement in the
311 amount of \$15,698,756 from obligated Project Worksheets (PWs).
312 \$15,465,675 is for Hurricanes Irma and Maria PWs and \$233,083
313 from Covid19 PWs. These reimbursements cover overtime, vehicle
314 repairs and fuel, generator fuel and maintenance, repairs to
315 facilities and signage.

316 There are 33 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) by which we
317 have been gauging our monthly and quarterly performance. Use of
318 KPIs through the three quarters of FY2023 have provided
319 incredibly useful information regarding units and initiatives
320 requiring additional attention and/or resources. With this
321 information our senior and executive teams have identified areas
322 of concern and are working feverishly towards resolving shortfalls

323 by way of re-assignments, increased personnel and initiatives, and
324 oversight and supervision.

325 **CONCLUSION**

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