1	THIRTHY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE OF THE VIRGIN
2	ISLANDS
3	COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY, JUSTICE, AND
4	PUBLIC SAFETY
5	Chairperson Kenneth L. Gittens
6	Tuesday, June 11 th , 2024
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Good morning Honorable Kenneth L. Gittens, Chairperson of the 8 Committee on Homeland Security, Justice and Public Safety, 9 Committee Members, members of the 35th Legislature, legislative 10 staff, members of the Virgin Islands Police Department, and to the 11 listening and viewing audience. I am Steven Phillip, Chief of Police for 12 the St Thomas, St. John, Water Island District representing the 13 Honorable Ray A. Martinez, Commissioner of the Virgin Islands Police 14 Department. I am here this afternoon to provide an overview of the 15 department's preparations for the upcoming St. John 4th of July 16 Celebration. Our preparations underscore our shared commitment to 17 ensuring the safety and security of our community during this 18 19 significant event.

The St. John 4th of July Celebration, a highlight of the United States Virgin Islands' cultural calendar, is more than just a festivity; it is a vibrant expression of our rich cultural heritage and a significant contributor to our local economy, attracting tourists from around the world. The celebration's history is deeply interwoven with the story of our islands, showcasing our unique traditions and the spirit of our

people. We are honored to host this prestigious event here in St. John,
an event that not only elevates these islands but also highlights our
capacity to manage high-profile events with utmost efficiency and topnotch security.

While the safety of our community members and guests is a 30 collaborative effort involving our federal and local counterparts, the 31 VIPD plays a pivotal role in ensuring that every citizen and visitor 32 enjoys a safe and protected celebratory environment. It is imperative 33 to note that the specifics of our operational plans are sensitive and 34 must remain confidential to ensure their effectiveness. However, I can 35 assure this committee that our strategies are comprehensive, 36 innovative, and tailored to address the unique challenges of such a 37 large-scale and high-profile event. 38

At the forefront of our operational plan is the deployment of our 39 centralized real-time information center, a state-of-the-art hub that 40 serves as our onsite communications and monitoring hub. This 41 advanced setup allows for instantaneous response and access to real-42 time surveillance of the celebration venues and immediate areas, 43 dispatch capabilities, and comprehensive communication channels. 44 For the duration of the events, we will be deploying temporary 45 cameras, utilizing our drone resources, mobile surveillance camera 46 systems, and various forms of digital equipment, enhancing our 47 surveillance capabilities, and ensuring a wide coverage of the 48 downtown Cruz Bay area as well as the surrounding communities with 49 50 foot patrols. The synergy between the real-time information center and

the off-site camera center is crucial, as they operate both independently and in tandem, providing redundant systems that ensure uninterrupted monitoring and rapid response to any situation.

Reflecting on last year's events, our proactive approach and 54 technological advancements led to several significant successes. 55 Notable among these were the arrests of individuals in possession of 56 illegal firearms. These interventions, made possible by our vigilant 57 officers and advanced surveillance, prevented potential escalations, 58 and maintained the overall peace of the celebration. Our strategy of 59 blending boots on the ground with digital surveillance has proven to be 60 effective, enabling us to intervene promptly in altercations and maintain 61 a safe environment for all attendees. 62

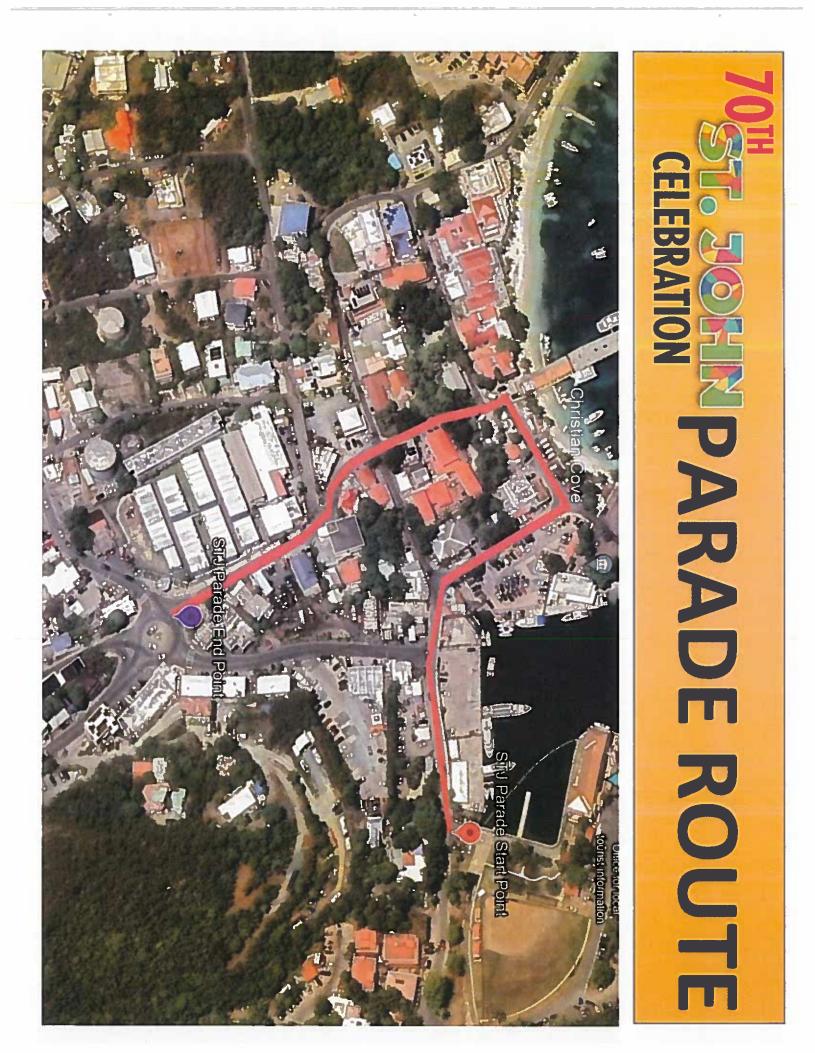
The success of our operations hinges on the unwavering 63 dedication and expertise of our VIPD officers. Their commitment to 64 65 public safety, especially during such large-scale events, is highly commendable. Our officers undergo diverse types of recurrent training, 66 ensuring they are well-equipped to manage the complexities and 67 challenges of event security. The diligence and professionalism 68 displayed by our team are a testament to their commitment to 69 safeguarding our community and upholding the law. As we prepare for 70 this year's celebration, we have the utmost confidence in the abilities 71 72 of our officers to effectively execute our plans, thereby increasing overall efficiency and ensuring a safe and enjoyable experience for 73 74 everyone involved.

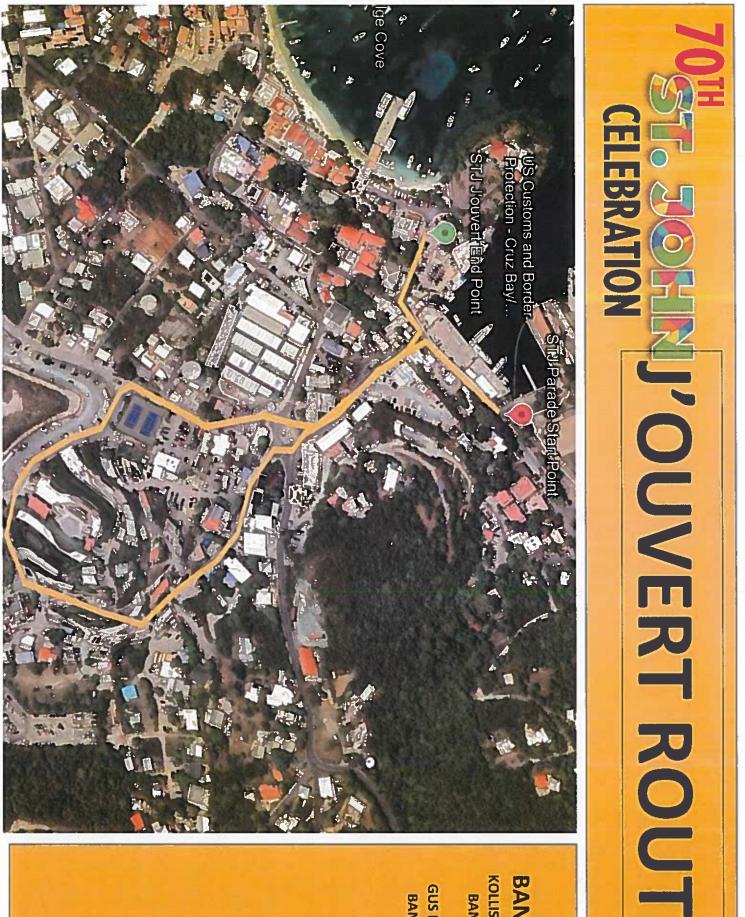
Looking ahead, the Virgin Islands Police Department remains 75 dedicated to continuous improvement and innovation in our security 76 strategies. We are committed to exploring and implementing modern 77 technologies and methodologies that enhance our capabilities to 78 79 further public safety. This commitment extends beyond the celebration, as we strive to maintain a high standard of security and peace in our 80 community throughout the year. We pledge to continue engaging with 81 our community, stakeholders, and federal partners to foster a 82 collaborative approach towards a safer and more secure environment 83 for all. 84

I wish to reaffirm the Virgin Islands Police Department's 85 unwavering commitment to the safety and well-being of our 86 community. These events are not merely celebrations; they serve as a 87 testament to our resilience, unity, and cultural pride. As we engage in 88 the various 4th of July activities, let us do so with mindfulness and 89 responsibility. Let us watch out for one another and promptly report any 90 suspicious activity to law enforcement. By being each other's 91 92 guardians, we can foster an environment of trust and security. By adhering to these precautions in addition to this event we can ensure 93 that the events across the territory remain safe and secure for all. 94

Before concluding, I must express my heartfelt thanks and appreciation to the police officers and supervisors of the VIPD for their dedication and steadfast commitment to policing our community throughout the year. Through your efforts, everyone can enjoy safe

- ⁹⁹ and joyous occasions. Thank you. The team and I are now available to
- address any questions that you may have.
- 101 Attached herewith is a copy of the J'ouvert and Parade Route
- 102 Celebration for your preview.





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