

1 **THIRTY-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 11th, 2024**

7
8 Good morning Honorable Kenneth L. Gittens, Chairperson of the
9 Committee on Homeland Security, Justice and Public Safety,
10 Committee Members, members of the 35th Legislature, legislative
11 staff, members of the Virgin Islands Police Department, and to the
12 listening and viewing audience. I am Steven Phillip, Chief of Police for
13 the St Thomas, St. John, Water Island District representing the
14 Honorable Ray A. Martinez, Commissioner of the Virgin Islands Police
15 Department. I am here this afternoon to provide an overview of the
16 department's preparations for the upcoming St. John 4th of July
17 Celebration. Our preparations underscore our shared commitment to
18 ensuring the safety and security of our community during this
19 significant event.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

99 and joyous occasions. Thank you. The team and I are now available to
100 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.

70TH ST. JOHN CELEBRATION
PARADE ROUTE



70TH ST. JOHNNY'S OUVVERT ROUTE CELEBRATION



BANDS
KOLLISSON
BAND
GUS BUS
BAND