

1                   **35th LEGISLATURE OF THE U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS**  
2                   **CHAIR: SENATOR KENNETH L. GITTENS**  
3                   **COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY, JUSTICE AND PUBLIC**  
4                   **SAFETY**  
5                   **VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT**  
6                   **FY2023 HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS TESTIMONY**  
7                   **SEPTEMBER 12, 2023**

8  
9           Good afternoon - Honorable Kenneth L. Gittens - Chair of the  
10   Committee on Homeland Security, Justice and Public Safety -  
11   Committee Members, other members of the 35th Legislature,  
12   listening and viewing audience. People of the United States Virgin  
13   Islands. I am Police Chief Sean Santos of the Virgin Islands Police  
14   Department St Croix District, today along with my colleague Police  
15   Chief Steven Phillip of the St Thomas-St John district. We are both  
16   very pleased to represent the United States Virgin Islands Police  
17   Department (VIPD). We appear before you with the goal of  
18   presenting updates to the department's preparations now that we  
19   are in the hurricane season. The 2023 Atlantic Hurricane Season  
20   began on 1 June and will end officially on 30 November.

21           Under the capable leadership of Commissioner Ray Martinez  
22   and his dedicated executive team, the Virgin Islands Police

23 Department (VIPD) remains steadfast in its commitment to  
24 prepare for and respond to the needs of the Territory. VIPD,  
25 serving as the lead agency for Emergency Support Function 13  
26 (ESF-13) – Public Safety & Security, continues to collaborate  
27 seamlessly with our local and federal partners, focusing on  
28 stabilizing the critical Community Lifeline of Safety & Security.  
29 This includes maintaining law and order, site security and access  
30 control and traffic control especially during evacuations or any  
31 mass movement of people and critical operational supplies.

32 Under Virgin Island Code, Title 23, the VITEMA Act (5233) of  
33 1986 The Governor may authorize use of Territory resources by  
34 declaring a “State of Emergency”. Upon Governor Bryan's prompt  
35 declaration of a pre-landfall state of emergency, a pivotal action  
36 occurs: all government law enforcement agencies across the  
37 territory promptly report to the Police Commissioner, making  
38 themselves available for mission assignments. The Virgin Islands  
39 National Guard also stands ready to lend support to VIPD,  
40 deploying either full-time force members or activating M-day or its

41 traditional membership under State Active-Duty orders,  
42 strengthening our collective response effort. Requests for military  
43 support for law enforcement missions will be coordinated between  
44 the Commissioner of the VI Police Department and the Adjutant  
45 General of the VI National Guard and then forwarded by the  
46 Commissioner to the Governor for approval.

47 Effective ongoing coordination between VITEMA, the Port  
48 Authority, and the US Coast Guard, ensuring the timely  
49 deployment of both Police and National Guard resources to St.  
50 John, preempting any port closures that may impede their mission.  
51 In the event of a disaster declaration, VIPD can swiftly request  
52 additional law enforcement resources through the Emergency  
53 Management Assistance Compact (EMAC), engaging key partners  
54 for support such as the New York Police Department (NYPD) and  
55 others.

56 Notably, a significant enhancement to this year's hurricane  
57 preparedness and response capabilities is the utilization of VIPD  
58 unmanned aerial systems (UAS) or drones. These advanced drones

59 play a pivotal role in conducting search and rescue missions,  
60 providing aerial analysis of various communities for damage  
61 assessment, and supporting escort efforts and crowd control at  
62 Points of Distribution (POD) sites when the need arises. This aerial  
63 support capability greatly bolsters the effectiveness of response and  
64 support operations.

65 In addition to aerial support, VIPD Marine assets have  
66 become indispensable in fulfilling the critical need for community  
67 support. In the event of port closures at the Cyril E. King Airport  
68 (CEKA) and the Henry Rolston Airport (HERA) these assets are  
69 instrumental in facilitating the movement of manpower and  
70 supplies throughout the district islands, ensuring the swift and  
71 efficient response to the demands of the community during  
72 emergencies.

73 Moreover, upon the establishment of a curfew by Governor  
74 Bryan, VIPD swiftly institutes traffic control points (TCP) across  
75 the islands. These TCPs are strategically placed to ensure road  
76 safety and to effectively control unauthorized traffic on the roads

77 during times of curfew. More importantly the TCPs are designed to  
78 and to provide freedom of movement for those critical supplies and  
79 support elements across the islands. VIPD continues its vital  
80 support to key agencies, including the Water & Power Authority  
81 and the Department of Public Works. These departments are  
82 extremely critical to the restoration of our community. The VIPD  
83 remains responsive to 9-1-1 calls until the onset of Tropical Storm  
84 Force winds (at speeds of 39 mph), after which they shelter in place  
85 until the storm passes, and sustained winds drop below Tropical  
86 Storm Force levels. This comprehensive approach underscores  
87 VIPD's unwavering commitment to the safety and security of the  
88 community in the ever-evolving landscape of emergency response  
89 in 2023.

## 90 **CONCLUSION**

91 Honorable Senator Kenneth L. Gittens and members of this  
92 body, thank you for giving us the opportunity today. We want to  
93 thank Governor Albert Bryan, Jr. and Lieutenant Governor  
94 Tregenza Roach for the continued leadership, guidance, and

95 support. To Commissioner Martinez and the entire VIPD family  
96 thank you for your unwavering support. To the people of the Virgin  
97 Islands, you play an integral role in helping the Virgin Islands  
98 Police department support you, let us continue to help each other,  
99 thank you. The team and I stand ready to answer your questions.