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Virgin Islands Police Department**

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**Mario M. Brooks  
Commissioner Nominee**

**Testimony  
before the  
35<sup>th</sup> Legislature of the Virgin Islands**

**Diane Capehart, Chairperson  
Committee on Rules and Judiciary**

**Confirmation Hearing  
Commissioner  
of the  
Virgin Islands Police Department**  
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***“Providing professional and responsive public safety service to all.”***

Good day, Honorable Chairwoman Diane T. Capehart, Chair of the Thirty-Fifth Legislature's Committee on Rules and Judiciary, Honorable Members of the Rules and Judiciary Committee, Non-Committee Members present, the amazing resilient staff and members of the Virgin Islands Police Department and the listening and viewing audience.

### **INTRODUCTION**

It is both a profound honor and a humbling privilege to appear before you today as the Honorable Governor Albert Bryan Jr.'s nominee for the position of Commissioner of the Virgin Islands Police Department. My name is Mario M. Brooks, and I appear before you with deep gratitude for the trust and confidence placed in me to lead this vital institution that serves as the cornerstone of public safety in our community. I assure you that if confirmed, I will work cooperatively with all three branches of Government and the public on issues that impact our community. My ultimate goal is to create a safer Virgin Islands for all.

First and foremost, I want to express my profound gratitude to God for granting me the grace, strength, and perseverance to reach this pivotal moment in my life. I am deeply appreciative of the Honorable Governor Albert Bryan, Jr., and the Honorable Lieutenant Governor Tregenza Roach for placing their trust and confidence in me to lead the Virgin Islands Police Department. Their faith in my ability to serve in this capacity is humbling and inspiring.

As a proud 30-year veteran of this Department, my journey has been profoundly shaped by the unwavering love and encouragement of my family and close friends. I owe a special debt of gratitude to my late grandmother, Beatrice, my dearly departed mother, Joyce, and my aunt, Edythe, —three extraordinary women who instilled in me the enduring values of hard work, discipline, and steadfast focus. Their wisdom and guidance have laid the foundation for my professional success and personal growth.

I am also eternally grateful to my princesses, Deanna and Denae, who inspire me to strive for excellence and motivate me to work tirelessly to make the United States Virgin Islands a place we can all be proud to call home.

To my incredible circle of family and loved ones, thank you for always believing in me. Your love, sacrifices, and guidance have poured into my life and helped shape my path. I am blessed to be part of a family that values commitment, dedication, and respect. Your support means the world to me, and I am forever grateful for your role in my journey. My family, you are my rock and my reason to serve.

A native of the U.S. Virgin Islands, I was born on the island of St Thomas. My early education occurred at Kirwan Terrace Elementary School and the Lockhart Elementary School. After the untimely passing of my late Uncle Roland Brooks, with whom I resided, I transitioned from St Thomas to the island of Anguilla, where I resided with my grandparents Jacob and Beatrice Brooks. Eventually, I moved to Miami, Florida, where I resided with extended family and completed high school. My value, pursuit of higher education, and love for home guided me back to St Thomas, where I enrolled and attended the University of the Virgin Islands. There, I completed an associate degree in Police Science and a bachelor's Degree in Psychology followed by a Masters Degree in Business and Organizational Security Management from the George H. Walker School of Business and Technology.

During the time I attended the University of the Virgin Islands, I also enlisted in the Virgin Islands Army National Guard at the **command** of my aunt Edythe. Upon completing basic combat training, I returned home, where I remain an active member of that service today. As an enlisted Soldier, I was deployed in 2003 to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The training I received in the Army was continuous, focused on preparing the Soldier to lead at every level within the Army. Shortly after returning home after my initial deployment, I made the decision to continue my military career as a commissioned officer. It was during those numerous officer leadership courses that I realized, the leadership schools the military

mandated for leaders as a requirement to advance at all levels, could also provide me with the skills I needed to be an effective commander in our police department. 2008 was quite a busy year as I was promoted to Sergeant in the Virgin Islands Police Department and Second Lieutenant in the Virgin Islands National Guard. I attribute much of my leadership style to some of those courses, (both civilian and military) I received over the years.

In 2008, after completing Officer Candidate School and the subsequent Basic Officer Courses, I was again deployed overseas to Kosovo. This time, my position as the unit's executive officer exposed me to executive-level leadership. I was responsible for planning and overseeing the daily operations of the unit. I subsequently took command of the unit while on deployment and was responsible for the successful redeployment back to the Virgin Islands. Upon successful completion of that mission, we redeployed back to the Virgin Islands in 2010. I returned to the VIPD, where I was appointed Commander of the Special Response Team. Under then Commissioner Delroy Richards, I was reassigned from the Special Operations Bureau to the Criminal Intelligence unit as the Commander. By this time, I was now the Commander of the Special Response Team, the Marine Unit, and the Criminal Intelligence Unit simultaneously. I was also assigned the additional duty of the department's INTERPOL liaison and one of three Department of Defense (DoD) Law Enforcement Support Office (LESO) coordinators. During my time in command of those units, we acquired a marine vessel for the St Thomas/St John district, the first vessel for that district in over 10 years. The Special Response Team added 11 nationally certified tactical operators territorially upon graduation from the Government Training Institute (GTI). The Criminal Intelligence Unit detectives received training and were FLETC-certified in Mobile Device Investigations.

As Commander of these units, I prioritized ensuring our personnel received the necessary training and equipment to meet national standards. With the support of former Commissioner Richards, I was able to implement several joint operations, both land and marine-based. In the aftermath of the devastating 2017 hurricanes, Commissioner Richards

assigned me to work with then-Territorial Chief of Police Winsbut McFarlane as a liaison to the Virgin Islands National Guard. My responsibilities included planning and coordinating joint missions and transportation for VIPD personnel and equipment between the islands, including the British Virgin Islands. While we focused on securing the territory, we also supported our colleagues in the BVI. This of course led to long hours for all territorial law enforcement personnel directly assigned to the VIPD. With the arrival of multiple support law enforcement agencies and State Active Duty and Title 32 personnel into the territory as a result of the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC), we could finally conduct personal assessments of our homes, property, and extended family and friends. This required careful coordination, given the limited communication capabilities at the time. Nonetheless, my objectives were clearly outlined, and that task was completed.

In 2020, I was promoted to Assistant Commissioner, and just as I had done in my previous positions, I hit the ground running. In this new role, I immediately began working to support the Commissioner's long-term strategic plan, which focused on addressing community concerns and enhancing the professional skills of our officers. This remains our core mission today. Over the past 4 years, I have seen the department grow into a much more resilient, battle-tested, and competent force. Despite hurricanes, a pandemic, and persistent staffing shortages, we continue to serve our community.

I encourage our sworn and civilian personnel, particularly the younger personnel, to continue pursuing higher education. I am a major supporter of our personnel pursuing degrees using programs such as the Career Incentive Program (CIP), of which I am a proud recipient. Our personnel prioritizing self-improvement only enhances the capabilities of our department. For example, I am an active member of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), an active member of the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE), and an active member of the Association of Caribbean Commissioners of Police (ACCP) as well as I currently serve on several oversight boards.

My early experiences in both military and civilian law enforcement, along with my current endeavors, have aided greatly in building the foundation of my deep understanding of the Virgin Islands Police Department. These experiences have profoundly shaped my leadership style and informed my vision for the department's future. Before I share my vision, I would like to ensure that everyone listening today clearly understands the Department's responsibilities and jurisdiction.

### **ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT**

The Virgin Islands Police Department began as the Department of Public Safety many years ago. Today, it is a regulatory agency with several revenue-generating divisions established under the Virgin Islands Code Title 23 Chapter 1. The VIPD derives much of its operational authority from the Virgin Islands Code, with key sections coming from Title 5, which governs public health and safety; Title 14, which covers criminal offenses and the associated penalties; and Title 19, which outlines criminal offenses and penalties. Finally, Title 23 defines public safety responsibilities, which include police duties, emergency management, and disaster response. VIPD collaborates with neighboring Caribbean jurisdictions and federal entities under mutual aid agreements, particularly in addressing cross-border crimes like human trafficking and drug smuggling.

There are two main divisions within the Department which are:

#### **Office of the Commissioner**

Of course, the Office of the Commissioner is responsible for the overall leadership, management, planning, and supervision of the Department so that it may effectively carry out its mission. The organization of the police force of the Virgin Islands within the U.S. Virgin Islands Police Department (V.I.P.D.) shall be in accordance with rules and regulations promulgated by the Police Commissioner and approved by the Governor.

The office of the police commissioner retains a legal division. This division is responsible for providing "in-house" legal advice to the Commissioner and the Department, including

contracts, policies, and procedures, implementing rules and regulations, and representing the Department with legal matters. The fiscal office, planning and research, communications, internal affairs, the training academy and information technology also fall under the commissioner's office.

### **Office of the Police Chief**

This office of the chief of police is responsible for all enforcement operations of the department which includes divisions such as the patrol division, traffic, criminal investigations, marine and intelligence. The Police Chief directly commands and oversees these divisions and provides all the resources for the senior leaders at the operational level to perform their duties efficiently and professionally.

## **THE VIPD TODAY & TOMORROW**

Since assuming the role of Acting Commissioner of the Virgin Islands Police Department, I have engaged with the senior staff on ways to streamline many of our practices, reviewed policies, and executed an overtime reduction initiative.

The Department is constantly evaluated by way of the consent decree; however, I do stress that as managers, we must evaluate our policies and procedures regularly and make adjustments when and where needed. Recently we achieved substantial compliance in training and citizen complaints and we remain with 3 outstanding paragraphs (1 use of force, 1 timeliness and 1 patterns and trends). It is our goal to achieve compliance with the remaining paragraphs thereby clearing the department from the consent decree. The Virgin Islands Police Department (VIPD) is home to a dedicated and knowledgeable staff, many of whom have devoted their entire careers to serving the community.

Regarding our online presence through our official website, we recently decided to take down the VIPD website due to poor management and a lack of timely updates. Since then, we have partnered with a new vendor and are on track to launch a new and improved VIPD website within the next 60 days. Our ultimate goal is to provide the community with

convenient online services, such as requesting and purchasing reports directly through the website. We have made significant progress in this area through a very recent collaboration with Carfax. Thanks to this partnership, you can now access and download a copy of your traffic accident report via the Carfax app or their website. We are also focused on reducing the time it takes for those reports to be available as this has been a major concern for many. This is just the beginning of our commitment to enhancing accessibility and convenience for the community.

A notable area where we have seen improvement is with the Spillman system. The Spillman system is a comprehensive case management system that, when properly utilized, can support seamless integration across multiple agencies. It is our goal to have all local law enforcement agencies trained and connected to the system. This integration will provide a seamless collection of all reports, providing the community with the swift service they deserve.

The territory is no stranger to trauma and trauma related experiences. From the hurricanes of 2017, to the COVID pandemic, to gang and gun related violence to the ongoing challenges of living including family and job related stress, the mental health of the Virgin Islands Police Department is of outmost importance to me. In my role as Commissioner, I will ensure that the department receives training to support identification of mental health presentation, counseling to include post violent crime counseling intervention and other therapeutic interventions to support the well being of our sworn, non-sworn personnel and staff. I believe that a mentally stable department will correlate into a mentally stable community where we are able to provide not only the physical security to the residents of the Virgin Islands, but to also ensure to lead with empathy. As such, it is my determination to champion the cause by announcing the importance of good and stable mental health for the department and the community at large.



### **1. Reduce Overtime by 30%**

Our patrol officers are the pulse of the department. Their presence throughout the community results in enhanced relationships and crime deterrence. At the top of the list of short-term goals is the intent to reduce our overtime expenditures by 30% by adjusting staffing levels during peak periods, implementing efficient scheduling practices (e.g., utilizing federal programs and initiatives, flexible work arrangements), addressing specific reasons for overtime, monitor progress and adjust strategies as needed. While this is an aggressive goal I am confident that we will reduce our overtime expenditures while having the ability to deploy more uniformed personnel into the community where they are most needed. Accountability is the key and we must utilize effective management to ensure that we are holding all within our authority accountable to the duties we have all sworn to serve and protect the people of this territory.

### **2. Centralize patrol operations**

We conducted a thorough evaluation of the current structure of patrol operations across all commands. As a result, we are moving forward with plans to establish a centralized command center to oversee dispatch, resource allocation, and incident response. This center will also standardize communication protocols and procedures for all patrol units, ensuring a more cohesive and effective approach. Additionally, we will implement data-driven strategies to guide patrol operations, enhancing their efficiency and impact. While I am confident that this strategy will be successful, I do see the need to increase our presence, which requires having more officers on the police force, which will result in greater visibility and connectivity. Please note that I fully support the feasibility of having other departments' law enforcement officers be assigned to VIPD to augment our patrol resources.

### **3. Establish RealTime Information Centers**

It is not a secret that Police Departments nationwide are critically understaffed, and it poses a serious challenge to the safety of officers and the community. The VIPD is no exception. To combat this, I will use a two-pronged approach. I intend to lead the VIPD in continuing to invest in technology (e.g., integrated dispatch software) to enhance real-time information sharing among officers. Our investment in technology (e.g., integrated dispatch software, the drone as a first responder program and others) to enhance real-time information sharing among officers will take shape shortly by launching our two Real-Time Information Centers. Both locations have been identified, and final buildout plans are underway. As we prioritize the remaining components of the Real Time Information Center (RTIC) project we will allocate necessary resources (financial, personnel, and equipment) to expedite implementation. We will collaborate with relevant agencies to integrate these systems seamlessly and regularly assess the effectiveness of the RTIC and make adjustments as needed based on feedback and performance metrics. I will also work with the human resources department to engage in a more robust recruitment initiative which will include community engagement, partnering with UVI, the high schools, the department of sports, parks, and recreation to promote careers within the department and utilize innovative advertising that improves our reputation and enhances the organization brand and find ways to further simplify the hiring process.

### **CONCLUSION**

Every branch and agency that constitutes the governing bodies of the Virgin Islands plays a vital role in building a Virgin Islands that we can all be proud of—one that not only endures but thrives for generations to come.

As Commissioner, I pledge to lead by example with empathy and demonstrate fairness in both word and deed. I will hold myself and my team accountable, prioritizing transparency to drive improvement. I will confront challenges head-on, approaching them with a creative and solution-oriented mindset. I will foster an environment of open communication, empowering the VIPD team.

Again, I am grateful to Governor Albert Bryan Jr. and Lt Governor Tregenza Roach for this nomination as Commissioner of the Virgin Islands Police Department. I also thank Senator Diane Capehart, Chairwoman of the Committee on Rules and Judiciary, and this body for allowing me to share my background, assessment, and vision for the Virgin Islands Police Department. I approach this nomination with a deep sense of responsibility and a reliance on God's guidance to consistently give my best.

To my extensive network of family members, and former colleagues, thank you for your love and support. To my family at the Virgin Islands Police Department, I sincerely thank you, and I look forward to us doing great things together in the years ahead. To my friends, colleagues, and the entire community who have shown tremendous support through calls, emails, texts, and messages, I appreciate you. Again, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward to discussing my love for the Virgin Islands Police Department with you further and answering any questions you may have.