

6THIRTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE OF THE U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY, JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Chairman: The Honorable Clifford A. Joseph Sr.

Virgin Islands Police Department St. Croix

USVI

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Update on the operations of the V.I. Police Department

Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the Senate, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on these very important matters. I am Sean A. Santos Sr.; Assistant Commissioner of Police of the Virgin Islands Police Department present on behalf of Police Commissioner Mario M. Brooks who could not be here today due to his military obligations. We sincerely appreciate this opportunity to provide an update on the operations of the Virgin Islands Police Department and to present the Department's position on Bill No. 36-0242, Bill No. 36-0301 and Executive Order 547-2026 as part of our Territory-Wide Crime Reduction Initiative.

We appreciate the Committee's continued partnership and support as we work together to strengthen public safety throughout the Virgin Islands. Today, I will provide an operational update on the Department, discuss our recent crime reduction efforts and technology initiatives, and present our position on Bills No. 36-0242 and 36-0301.

Bill No. 36-0242 (Peace Officers for Department of Sports, Parks and Recreation Enforcement Officers)

The Virgin Islands Police Department recognizes and values the important work performed by the Department of Sports, Parks, and Recreation in maintaining our parks, recreational facilities, and public spaces. However, after careful review, the Department respectfully does not support Bill No. 36-0242. Our position is not a reflection of the professionalism or dedication of those employees. Rather, we believe the Territory should avoid creating another law enforcement entity when we can better coordinate the public safety resources that already exist.

Creating yet another law enforcement entity within central Government creates additional responsibilities involving training, certification, equipment, liability, policy oversight, and prosecutorial coordination. Not to mention that it saturates a local profession that is already diminishing in human resources in every current department that has a law enforcement division. It also increases the risk of overlapping jurisdictions, inconsistent enforcement, and additional costs for an already resource-constrained government. Instead, we recommend practical alternatives that accomplish the same objective, including:

- Assigning dedicated law enforcement and security resources during major events;
- Expanding the use of surveillance cameras and Real-Time Intelligence Center monitoring;
and
- Developing joint operational plans during periods of increased public activity.

These approaches improve safety while allowing Sports, Parks, and Recreation to remain focused on serving our youth and communities. For these reasons, we respectfully recommend that the Committee not advance Bill No. 36-0242 in its current form.

Territory-Wide Crime Reduction Initiative

On June 29, 2026, Governor Albert Bryan Jr. issued Executive Order No. 547-2026 authorizing the temporary assignment of peace officers from multiple government agencies to assist the Virgin Islands Police Department during a recent increase in violent crime. The initiative concluded on July 12th and ran concurrently with the annual St. John Celebration.

During this fourteen-day operation, the Department implemented intelligence-led policing strategies that included saturation patrols, violent offender suppression, traffic enforcement, gun violence reduction operations, Real-Time Intelligence support, marine operations, and drone deployments.

The results were significant. We increased police visibility in high-crime areas, conducted hundreds of community contacts, expanded traffic enforcement, strengthened celebration security, and successfully integrated officers from multiple agencies into a unified public safety mission.

Most importantly, this initiative demonstrated that coordinated government resources and

intelligence-driven policing can improve public safety without permanently expending law enforcement resources. Attached you will find data sheets that reflect the results of these initiatives.

Public Safety Technology

The Department continues to modernize its public safety technology. More than 100 surveillance cameras have now been deployed across the Territory. Phase II installations are complete on St. Thomas and St. John, while installations continue on St. Croix.

We have also installed over 50 License Plate Recognition cameras at strategic locations and will continue expanding that network across the territory starting with the town of Fredericksted on St Croix.

These systems, along with ShotSpotter technology, are now integrated into a centralized platform that supports our new Real-Time Intelligence Centers on St. Croix and St. Thomas.

These technologies are already helping investigators identify suspects, locate stolen vehicles, track criminal activity, provide real-time intelligence, and improve officer safety. As additional cameras and technology come online, these capabilities will continue to grow thereby providing the VIPD with the investigative support that we so desperately need.

Recent Violent Crime Activity

The recent increase in robberies and homicides has understandably raised concerns throughout our community. In response, the Department immediately implemented an aggressive violence reduction strategy focused on intelligence-led enforcement, focused on repeat violent offenders, increased patrols in areas identified as areas of concern and stronger criminal investigations. We also maintain very close working relationships with our federal partners, increased our community engagement, and have improved our relationship with our colleagues at the VI Department of Justice.

These efforts remain ongoing, and we remain committed to identifying, arresting, and successfully prosecuting those responsible while preventing retaliatory violence.

Long-Term Crime Reduction Strategy

While enforcement is critical, lasting reductions in violent crime require a balanced approach. Our long-term strategy includes expanding our Real-Time Intelligence Centers, launching the Drone as a First Responder program, increasing surveillance and License Plate Recognition technology.

Expanding our regional investigative support remains one of our most important goals in our strategic plan. It is only through alliances made with our Caribbean counterparts that we continue to build those relationships, share critical intelligence and focus on crime disruption and deterrence initiatives. This is how we will finally see the crime reduction that we seek.

As a pillar in our overall strategy, we have also increased our investment in youth intervention programs. These programs under the Office of Community Relations continue to reap amazing results. We will continue to expand these programs targeting our youth for an improved future within our community.

This comprehensive approach reflects national best practices while addressing the unique public safety needs of the Virgin Islands.

Current Crime Statistics

For CY 2026, VIPD's Part 1 statistics reflect a 13 percent decrease in violent crime when compared to the statistics of CY2025. Through quarterly CompStat analysis and intelligence reviews, we continue focusing our resources on the deterrence of crime. These figures remain subject to change as investigations continue.

Bill No. 36-0301 (Electronic Communication Devices in Correctional Facilities)

The Virgin Islands Police Department strongly supports Bill No. 36-0301. The illegal possession of cellular phones and other electronic communication devices by incarcerated individuals presents a serious threat to public safety. These devices are frequently used to coordinate criminal activity, intimidate victims and witnesses, direct gang operations, facilitate narcotics trafficking, commit fraud, plan assaults, and interfere with ongoing investigations. When located within the Bureau of Corrections VIPD personnel are notified and provide support by way of device exploitation. The data is then utilized for further investigations inside and outside of the facility.

This legislation strengthens institutional security, protects the public, and supports law enforcement efforts by establishing meaningful penalties for possession of these devices.

The Department respectfully urges the Committee to give Bill No. 36-0301 favorable consideration.

Conclusion

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, the Virgin Islands Police Department remains committed to

protecting our community through professionalism, innovation, accountability, and strong partnerships.

Our recent crime reduction initiative demonstrated that collaboration among government agencies can produce meaningful public safety results without creating additional law enforcement entities. At the same time, our continued investments in technology, intelligence-led policing, and community partnerships are building a stronger, more effective police department for the future.

On behalf of Commissioner Mario M. Brooks and the dedicated men and women of the Virgin Islands Police Department, I thank Governor Albert Bryan Jr., Lieutenant Governor Tregenza Roach, this Legislature, our federal and territorial partners, and the people of the Virgin Islands for their continued support.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. We remain available to answer any questions the Committee may have.