

**TESTIMONY
BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY, JUSTICE AND
PUBLIC SAFETY**

36th LEGISLATURE OF THE U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 2025
THE PEACE OFFICER STANDARDS AND TRAINING

Good day Honorable Senator Clifford A. Joseph, Sr., Chairman of the Committee on Homeland Security, Justice and Public Safety, distinguished members of the 36th Legislature, legislative staff, ladies and gentlemen in the chamber, members of the media, and our viewing and listening audience.

My name is Gleston McIntosh, Jr., and I serve as the Executive Director of the Virgin Islands Peace Officer Standards and Training Council (POST). It is both an honor and a privilege to provide testimony today in support of **Bill No. 36-0136 an Act amending Title 23 of the Virgin Islands Code, Chapter 17, Subchapter II, by adding new sections 1331 through 1336 to mandate lethal weapon training for private security guards and investigators.**

Importance of the Bill

Private security professionals are often the first responders to incidents at businesses, schools, government facilities, and public events. They frequently encounter threats before police arrive and must make critical, split-second decisions that can affect lives.

Currently, unlike sworn peace officers who undergo rigorous POST-certified academy training, private investigators and security guards who carry firearms are not held to the same standards. This creates a gap that puts both officers and the public at risk.

Bill No. 36-0136 closes this gap by establishing mandatory training, and certification programs in lethal weapon handling, law enforcement practices, and protection of citizens' rights all under the administration and oversight of the Commissioner of Police.

By mandating lethal weapon training, it will:

- Ensure weapons are handled safely and responsibly.
- Reduce the likelihood of negligent discharges or unlawful use of firearms.
- Provide security professionals with training in de-escalation, decision-making under stress, and constitutional protection.
- Increase public trust that armed private security officers are properly vetted, trained, and certified.

Clarification of “Investigator” Definition

It's also important that the law clearly defines who an “investigator” is, having a clear definition avoids confusion, supports proper enforcement, and keeps compliance and oversight consistent.

Recommended Training Components

The training program, to be administered under the Virgin Islands Police Department (VIPD), should include:

- Firearms Proficiency & Safety, Proper Firearm Storage and a POST approved firearms qualification course.
- Use-of-Force & De-Escalation - Force Continuum, Conflict Resolution, Decision Making Under Stress, and Crisis Intervention.
- Legal & Ethical Standards - local and federal laws, detention and arrest authority and liability awareness.
- Scenario-Based Training - Active Shooter Response, workplace violence, crowd management, and coordinated response with VIPD.
- Lifesaving Skills – First Aid, CPR, and trauma response training. The inclusion of VIPD’s Training Division in oversight will ensure consistency, accountability, and ongoing compliance.

Certification & Continuing Qualification

To maintain high standards, the legislation should require:

- Annual firearms qualification to ensure continued competency.
- Yearly refresher courses on use-of-force and Constitutional Updates.
- At least eight hours of continuing education annually in situational awareness, community engagement, and professional ethics.
- Consideration of physical and psychological fitness screenings to confirm readiness to safely carry a firearm.

Role of Law Enforcement in Implementation

The Police Commissioner and Training Division must be directly involved in administering, monitoring, and enforcing training standards. Their leadership will guarantee proper certification, periodic review, and enforcement of compliance.

Benefits to the Territory

The passage of this legislation will:

- Enhance **public safety** by ensuring all armed private security guards and investigators are trained to professional standards.
- Reduce **liability exposure** for private security agencies and government entities territory wide.
- Promote **partnership** between private security guards and law enforcement, improving coordination and response to public safety challenges.
- Align the Virgin Islands with **national best practices** for armed private security guards and investigators.

Conclusion

Mr. Chairman and members of this Committee, Bill No. 36-0136 is both timely and essential. It strengthens accountability, closes dangerous training gaps, and ensures that anyone carrying a lethal weapon in the capacity of a private security guard or investigator is fully prepared, certified, and held to the highest standard of professionalism.

On behalf of POST, I respectfully urge the legislature to make these amendments to the BILL and provide the Virgin Islands Police Department and its Training Division with the necessary support to implement it effectively.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am available to answer any questions you may have.