

**THIRTY-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**  
**September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

**BILL NO. 36-0136 (Sponsored by: Senator Avery L. Lewis)**

Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the Senate, thank you for the opportunity to testify today in this matter. 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, I submit this testimony in support of Bill No. 36-0136, An Act amending Title 23 V.I. Code, Chapter 17, Subchapter II by adding Sections 1331 and 1336, mandating Lethal Weapon Training for Security Guards and Investigators.

On behalf of the Virgin Islands Police Department (VIPD), thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Bill No. 36-0136. This bill which would require standardized, mandatory lethal-weapons and use-of-force training (initial certification, recurring requalification, de-escalation and reporting requirements) for armed security guards and investigators in the Virgin Islands is a

public-safety measure grounded in national evidence and best practices. The private security sector is large, operates widely in public spaces, and too often functions under inconsistent training and oversight. Requiring robust, standardized training will reduce risk to the public, to the security officers themselves, and to the communities they serve.

Across the United States, there are more than one million security guards on duty every single day. In fact, they often outnumber sworn police officers. They stand guard on post in shopping centers, hospitals, schools, airports, and government buildings. Many of them are the first line of defense when trouble arises. But unlike police officers, whose training is standardized and rigorous, the training of security guards varies wildly from state to state and in some places, it's shockingly minimal. That patchwork system has consequences. National studies and case reviews of shootings show that simply having a firearm does not mean someone is prepared to make a life-or-death decision in a split second. In fact, under stress, untrained individuals are more likely to freeze, make poor decisions, or escalate a situation instead of calming it. Research confirms that when security personnel receive robust training especially scenario-based training that mimics real-world stress their decision-making improves, they handle weapons more safely, and they use force more responsibly.

We have seen too many examples, nationally, of armed guards who were put in difficult situations without the skills or judgment to handle them. That is a danger not just to the public, but also to the guards themselves. Passing this bill means we stop leaving it to chance. It means we set a clear standard: if you are going to carry a lethal

weapon on behalf of the public, you must prove that you are competent, trained, and accountable.

The specific requirements in Bill 36-0136 initial certification, ongoing training, annual requalification, de-escalation instruction, and mandatory reporting of incidents are exactly what national experts recommend. These steps aren't about making life harder for security officers; they're about giving them the tools they need to succeed and keeping the public safe at the same time.

Some may worry about the cost of requiring more training. But the truth is, the cost of not requiring it is far higher in lives lost, in injuries sustained, and in the liability that comes when preventable tragedies occur. By raising the standard now, we reduce those risks and create a professional security workforce that the public can trust.

This bill doesn't just protect the public. It also protects responsible security officers who want to do their jobs the right way. When they are properly trained, their professionalism shines through, and they gain the confidence of the communities they serve.

Mr. Chairman, Senators, Bill No. 36-0136 is not just a legal amendment; it is a statement of values. It says we will not leave public safety to chance, and we will not arm individuals without ensuring they are fully prepared for that responsibility.

For these reasons, we, the VIPD respectfully and strongly urge you to pass this measure.

We thank you for your time and consideration and we stand ready to answer any additional questions that you may have.