

Image not found or type unknown

## 64 Unsettled Vendor Debts Pile Up for Virgin Islands National Guard

**During budget hearings, the spotlight falls on VING's failure to clear payments, affecting 64 vendors**

Senate / **Published On July 10, 2024 04:47 AM /**

Nelcia Charlemagne **July 10, 2024**

Image not found or type unknown



**V.I. National Guard Estate Bethlehem Military Compound** By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

The list of government entities with substantial debts owed to external vendors continues to grow. On Tuesday, members of the Senate Committee on Budget, Appropriations, and Finance were startled to learn that the Virgin Islands National Guard, through the Office of the Adjutant General, owes 64 vendors.?

The Office's executive director, Nikita Ward, who revealed the long list of unpaid vendors, was however unable to inform legislators of the aggregate amount of debt. The news prompted a series

of questions from Senator Novelle Francis, including whether they had made the payment requests through the Department of Finance, and if the office was “keeping those vendors updated in terms of the monies owed to them.”

The response provided by Ms. Ward was the same explanation offered by numerous agencies who have already appeared before the committee to defend their FY2025 budget requests. “The payments are approved, however, we're just awaiting check payment from the Department of Finance,” said Ms. Ward. Nonetheless, she assured the concerned senators that the office is “collaborating with the Department of Finance to ensure these vendors are being paid as the disbursements occur.”

Despite their best efforts, Sen. Francis and his colleagues remained distressed by the fact that over five dozen different vendors await payment. He reminded Ms. Ward of Governor Albert Bryan’s commitment to [relieve vendors](#) who have not been paid for over 90 days. “Hopefully you'll get on the bandwagon and ask [the Department of] Finance to really honor the governor's request,” he suggested.

The Virgin Islands National Guard receives millions of dollars in reimbursable federal funds. However, VING cannot initiate the process to recoup money spent on vendor payments until the Department of Finance completes the payment process. “It's a continuous education of our personnel who actually action them at the finance level,” lamented Adjutant-General Kodjo Knox-Limbacker. Payments to vendors must be physically vetted by federal representatives who then authorize the start of the reimbursement process.

This bureaucracy is associated with the Master Cooperative Agreement between VING and the Department of Defense National Guard Bureau, which features different processes than other federal grants. Still, Senator Donna Frett-Gregory wondered if the aforementioned lags were causing VING to “impact the cash flow here in the territory.” According to reports by Jenifer O’Neal, former director of the Office of Management and Budget, the USVI may face a [revenue deficit of over \\$90 million](#) at the end of FY2024. “As we make these payments, we are making them from our general fund,” she emphasized.

Though Ms. Frett-Gregory learned that the Office had repaid \$2,002,000 to the Government of the Virgin Islands as of July 3, 2024, she was still concerned about the time between completing payments to vendors and completing the drawdown on federal reimbursement funds.?

For FY2025, the Office of the Adjutant General is requesting a general fund appropriation of \$2,931,474. According to Knox-Limbacker, it will be used to “sustain a ready, relevant and responsive Army and Air National Guard Joint Force with worldwide force projection capabilities.” The office also anticipates federal fund contributions to the tune of \$50,800,000. A portion of their general fund request, \$76,000, will be the matching funds for the federal dollars.

Of the remaining requested general fund appropriation, \$1,131,281 is for personnel costs, including salaries for 18 full-time staff, including those associated with the About Face & Forward March programs rolled out by the office. The personnel figure also accounts for the 25% match for 5 out of 7 vacancies. Fringe benefits for FY2025 are calculated at \$501,492.

In the FY2025 budget, \$220,180 is earmarked for capital projects, which includes support for the About Face and Forward March programs and matching funds for military facility updates. Additionally, \$141,160 is set aside for purchasing supplies necessary for these programs among other needs. The utilities budget is \$322,023. Operational services and miscellaneous charges are allocated \$615,338, which encompasses a \$145,000 contribution to the National Guard Pension

Fund, benefiting 38 qualifying individuals.

© Viconsortium 2026