

logo not found or type unknown

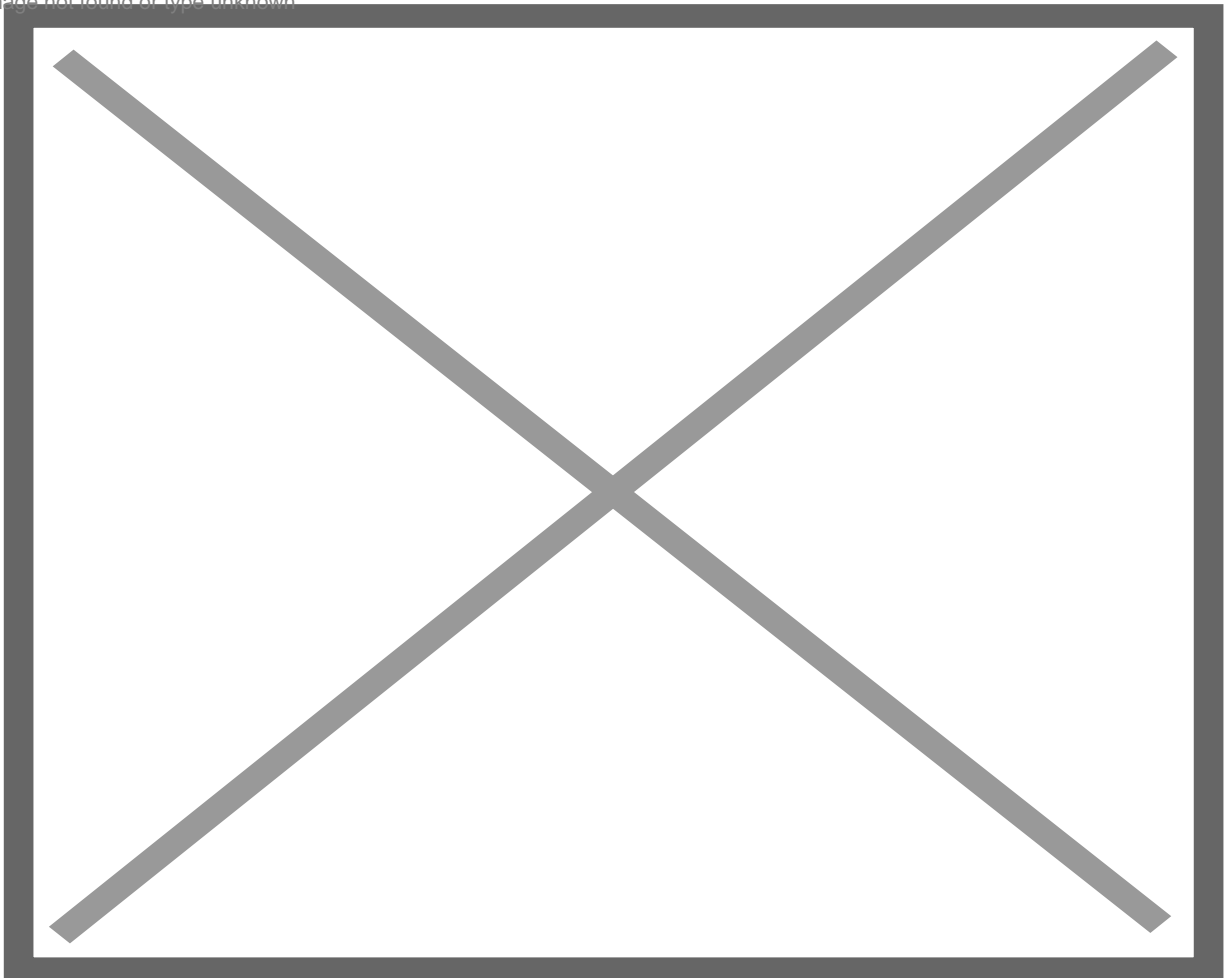
VIPD Admits 40 New Patrol Cars Unused for a Year

Senators express frustration over administrative delays as \$10.6 million fleet faces prolonged inactivity, despite full vendor payment and critical need for patrol units

Government / **Published On July 30, 2024 05:39 AM /**

Nelcia Charlemagne **July 30, 2024**

Image not found or type unknown



A VIPD patrol vehicle By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

During Monday's hearing of the Senate Committee on Budget, Appropriations and Finance, lawmakers were shocked to learn that some much-needed police vehicles had been sitting unused for an extended period of time.?

In the last fiscal year, VIPD used \$10,608,860.24 in funding from the America Rescue Plan Act to purchase 157 vehicles. Most are in use - approximately 80% according to Acting Commissioner Mario Brooks. However, from his line of questioning, Senator Novelle Francis elicited an

admission from Mr. Brooks that approximately 40 vehicles destined to become patrol units had been sitting at the Department of Property & Procurement for about a year - one third of their designated 3-year service lifespan.?

According to Mr. Brooks, the vehicles are unable to be deployed until they receive some specialized communications equipment, “as well as kits that would allow the units to actually stay on the road.” Mr. Francis was not convinced. “The vehicle has a wheel. They have [an] engine. I mean, we park up a vehicle because we want to be able to communicate? I mean, that could come afterwards,” he suggested.

“You won’t get an argument out of me on that,” Mr. Brooks conceded, saying that the department has expedited the process to get the units into service. “So these vehicles are actually being moved out onto the road at this time.”

In response to a question from committee chair Senator Donna Frett-Gregory, Mr. Brooks explained that unlike in the past, this batch of vehicles was meant to be retrofitted locally by vendors in the territory – a money-saving decision. “The unmarked vehicles, the vehicles that went to the Criminal Investigation Bureau...they were retrofitted on time,” Mr. Brooks noted. The 40 earmarked for the patrol division, however, “have the bulk of the technology that we needed for those specific units,” explained Mr. Brooks. The various pieces of equipment necessary have “just started to trickle in,” causing the inordinate delay, he said. Mr. Brooks reiterated that like Senator Kenneth Gittens had suggested, “we went ahead and made a decision until those parts come in, just go ahead and push those vehicles out.” Some of those 40 units are already on the road, Mr. Brooks disclosed.?

Senator Frett-Gregory was affronted to learn that the year-long delay had not been caused by any payment issues on VIPD’s end of the contract. “The vendor was already paid,” Mr. Brooks disclosed, unable to offer an explanation as to why so long a time had elapsed between payment and arrival of the necessary retrofitting equipment. “We cannot allow businesses to hold us hostage,” Frett-Gregory declared.