

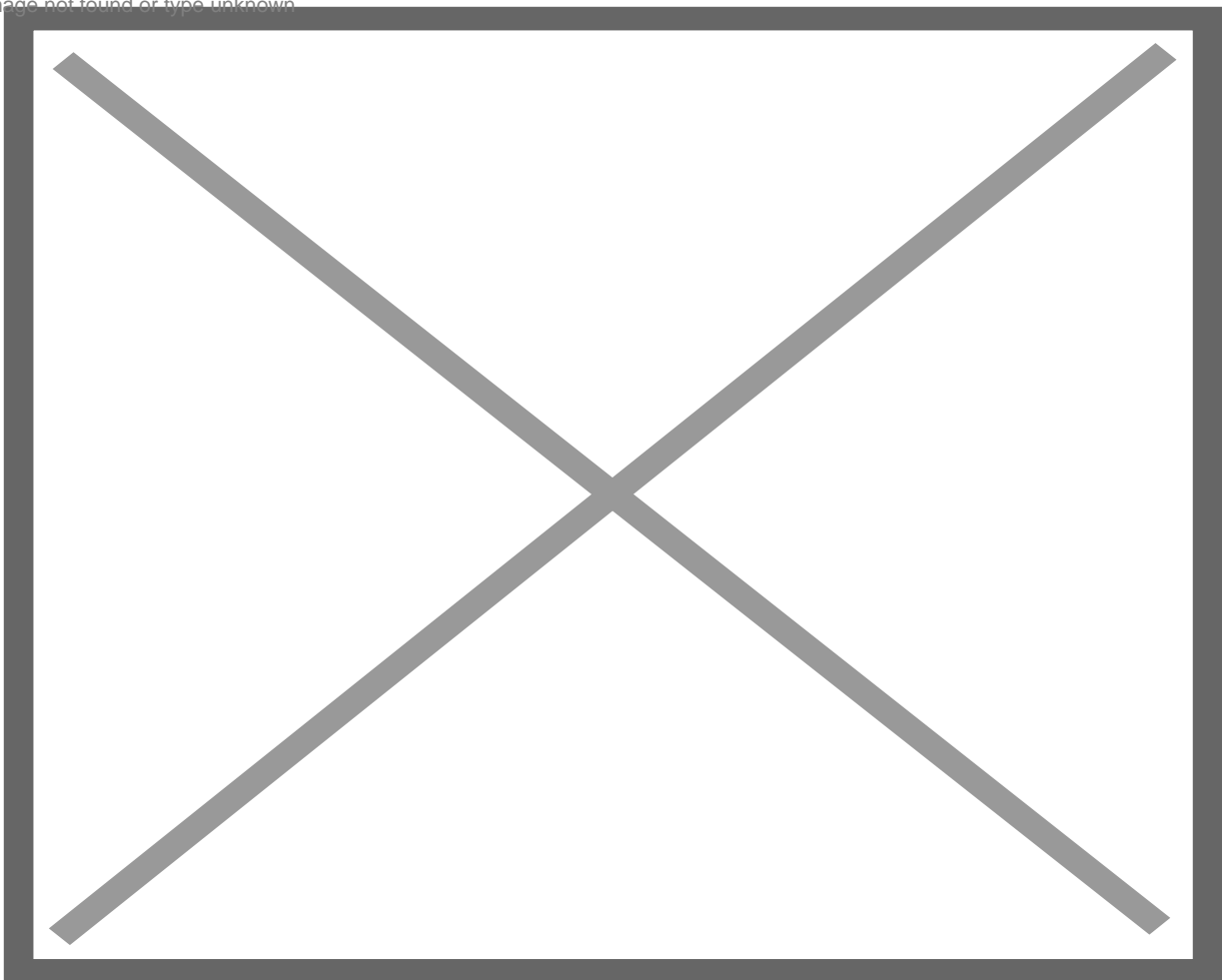
VI National Guard Exits Federal Oversight After Six Years of Transformation – Challenges Remain

With 140 action items completed, VING emerges stronger but faces ongoing challenges, including the need to rebuild its aviation program and address national-level issues

Government / **Published On September 23, 2024 06:00 PM /**

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The V.I. National Guard has reached a significant milestone, officially released from the National Guard Bureau Assisted Office program after six years of close oversight.

Major General Kojo Knox-Limbacker, speaking at a Government House press briefing on Monday, highlighted the transformation VING has undergone since being placed on the program in 2018. The program was initiated after an investigation identified 167 areas in need of improvement, ranging from governance to operational readiness. Now, with 140 of those action items successfully addressed, VING is recognized as a revitalized and capable force. However,

leaders emphasize that more work remains to ensure long-term sustainability and growth.

“As of 12 September 2024, the Virgin Islands National Guard has been released from the National Guard Bureau Assisted Office program,” said MG Knox-Limbacker. “This accomplishment was due to our change in performance, culture, hard work, proper governance, and our tremendous progress.”

He added, “A system of effective governance and accountability through this program enabled VING to close 140 of the 167 action plans identified by the Army National Guard for its initial findings and investigation,” the major general declared.

Over the years, VING has “proven that it is ready, relevant, and a responsive joint force that can deploy globally anywhere to meet our nation’s needs,” said MG Knox-Limbacker. He thanked everyone, military and civilian alike, who put in the work to achieve the results the VI National Guard is now enjoying. “However, as we celebrate, we must recognize we still have work to do for long term sustainability,” he cautioned, warning the men and women of VING not to rest on their laurels.

?Governor Albert Bryan Jr., Commander-in-Chief of the VI National Guard, reminded the public of a [press conference his predecessor held in 2017](#), which outlined all the areas in which VING needed to focus on for improvement. “Today I have to say I’m so proud of our officers, or soldiers, everybody...for this tremendous accomplishment,” he said, beaming. “This achievement not only strengthens our Guard, but it also reaffirms our trust in the men and women who serve our territory with honor and dedication.”

Some of the major items that remain include restarting the Guard’s helicopter and aviation program. According to Major General Knox-Limbacker, some Guardsmen and women were deployed to Michigan to learn how to become mission ready, however there is still need to construct a hangar “that can actually be resilient enough for our saltwater climate.” An earlier \$24 million allocation to build a hangar “on the north side of our airport” was pulled, the major general said, because of the high cost of construction – calculated at \$1700 per square foot. Other items include challenges shared across the entirety of the National Guard, or issues that are beyond VING’s locus of control.

Nevertheless, both Major General Knox-Limbacker and Governor Bryan are exceedingly pleased at the release of VING from the National Guard’s assistance program, and have vowed to continue working so as to take VING from strength to strength.