

## VIPD Welcomes New Class of Officers on St. Croix, Honoring Achievements and Commitment

The newest graduates, including full-time peace officers and auxiliary officers, were sworn in by Judge Douglas Brady. Officer Glenroy Gittens received the commissioner's award, while leaders and officials emphasized unity and responsibility

Government / **Published On January 08, 2025 07:05 AM /**

Janeke Simon **January 08, 2025**

Image not found or type unknown



**Cohort of 2025 VIPD graduates on St. Croix. By. VIPD**

The newest crop of peace officers and auxiliary officers on St. Croix were welcomed into the Virgin Islands Police Department fraternity on Tuesday, after taking their oath as administered by Superior Court judge Douglas Brady. "Whatever you do with your career is up to you," said Captain Colon-Wattley, Officer in Charge of the VIPD Training Bureau, warning the newly

minted officers that they were now responsible for either cementing or tarnishing their legacy and that of the organization.

The class of 2024-1, consisting of approximately 20 full-time peace officers (Commandos) and auxiliary officers (Night Owls), received their certificates of completion. Some were recognized for their outstanding achievements over the course of the program. Police Officer Glenroy Gittens received the commissioner's award, presented to the individual with the highest overall score across three categories – academics, physical fitness, and firearms.

“Imagine me at 37 years old, cramming information like I'm back in high school – except I have back pains and I need coffee to stay up,” Officer Gittens laughed as he addressed the gathering. “Learning to march in sync felt like a comedy skit at first,” he said, reminiscing about the early days of training. “Left foot, right foot – no, your other right,” he quipped.

“We deserve a gold medal for not losing our minds,” Mr. Gittens declared, referencing the rigorous mental and physical challenges recruits endured during the course of their training. The hardships, however, created unity amongst the class of Commandos, Officer Gittens noted. “We kept the faith alive.” Mr. Gittens made a point of thanking the cadre instructors for their leadership and guidance. “You weren't just our mentors, you were like our parents,” he noted. He also thanked the cohort's families and friends for unwavering support.

Jordan Edwards, representing the Night Owls class of auxiliary officers, also referenced the strong bond created among his cohort as the recruits worked their way through training. “Alongside me are guys I no longer call friends, but brothers,” he said, naming his fellow graduates. “We have shared an experience that tested our limits and challenged our reserves.” Officer Edwards urged his cohort to carry the bonds forged and lessons learned at training forward into their new careers.

Police Commissioner Designee Mario Brooks, addressing a graduating cohort for the first time in his new role, emphasized to the new officers that the law enforcement community was an “extended family.” He asked retired peace officers in the audience to identify themselves with raised hands, and urged the graduating class to seek out the expertise of those veterans as they navigate the challenges of their new career.

As he addressed the new class of officers, Governor Albert Bryan Jr. highlighted the solemn burden placed on them by their oath, noting that no matter what they were doing or where they went in the territory, they would remain members of law enforcement. He also called on the community to support the enforcement officer community. “We all live in this house called the Virgin Islands together. We're all on this same big team, and for each of us to get to tomorrow in any kind of productive way, we each need to do our jobs,” Governor Bryan said. He reminded listeners that all police officers are Virgin Islanders with family who love and care for them, and should be treated as such when the public encounters them on duty. “When they stop you in the street, remember that,” he admonished.

“We owe them our respect, our honor and our gratitude,” Governor Bryan continued. He called Officers Smith and Williams, who were injured when responding to a recent domestic violence distress call, “heroes.” He noted that the woman who made the call could have been seriously injured or even killed if there was no police response. “These officers put their lives on the line every single day,” he noted. Despite recent events, Governor Bryan urged officers to remember even in the face of hostility from certain members of the public, that the citizenry – in overwhelming numbers – actually supports the law enforcement community they rely on for protection.

