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Unauthorized Gov't Vehicle Use is "Out of Control"; Lawmakers Demand Enforcement, Consequences for Violators

Senators pressed officials on the continued unauthorized use of government vehicles, with Senator Avery Lewis calling the situation “out of control.”

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Nelcia Charlemagne **February 25, 2025**

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“Twenty-four-seven, you're seeing government vehicles on the road... It's literally a free-for-all now in terms of government vehicles,” said Senator Kurt Violet on Monday, as members of the Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs, and Consumer Protection discussed ongoing concerns regarding the misuse of government assets.

Officials from the V.I. Department of Property and Procurement (DPP) were questioned on the enforcement timeline for a newly developed vehicle-use policy, which remains under review by the Department of Personnel and various unions. In the meantime, DPP Commissioner Lisa Alejandro explained, “We are utilizing the GPS tracking system and providing training to agencies to monitor employees' usage of government vehicles.”

To address concerns in the short term, Alejandro has mandated agencies to submit reports listing all government vehicles, their status, and whether they are authorized for 24-hour use. noted that she has collaborated with the Virgin Islands Police Department (VIPD) to stop vehicles that are not on the official list. However, when questioned by Senator Novelle Francis, she acknowledged, “I have not been notified” of any government vehicles being stopped for improper use.

Recalling past enforcement efforts, Senator Francis expressed concern: “As police chief and police commissioner, we had many reports back when enforcement was active.”

Committee Chair Senator Avery Lewis concurred that decisive action is necessary. “I think it's about time we tell the governor, ‘You need to send out an Executive Order to his commissioners. This leniency is out of control,’” he stated. Like his colleagues, he has observed government vehicles being used across the territory outside of working hours. “We have to draw the line. We cannot continue,” Lewis emphasized.

Senator Violet attributed the issue to “a lack of management and a lack of oversight.” He was surprised to learn from Ms. Alejandro that while GPS reports are generated, they are not automatically shared with individual departments unless specifically requested. “How can departments effectively monitor activity if they do not have access to the necessary information?” he asked.

According to Ms. Alejandro’s explanation to Senator Carla Joseph, reports of government vehicle misuse are handled internally. “What they do request of me is access to the GPS tracking system, and they’re able to take disciplinary actions within the agencies,” she stated.

Senator Alma Francis Heyliger argued that the issue of government asset misuse should have already been resolved. She commended DPP for developing a policy to regulate vehicle use but lamented the need to revisit the discussion repeatedly. “In four years, we haven't come up with a resolution. Something is gravely wrong... The buck stops with the individuals who asked to run this government.”

Francis Heyliger was particularly frustrated that employees continue to use vehicles past 5 p.m., requiring the government to spend taxpayer funds to monitor them. The tracking system, installed in most of the Government of the Virgin Islands (GVI) fleet, also monitors driving behavior. She insisted on stricter consequences: “You are hired by me. Five o’clock, park up my car. It’s that simple. And if you don’t do it, you’re either suspended, you’re terminated, you get warnings immediately. You come in the morning, the keys are taken away. Those are basic things. I shouldn’t be having these conversations for four years.”

She further expressed frustration that ongoing discussions about vehicle misuse were overshadowing more pressing government matters. “These conversations become distractions because when the major issues that we really have in government need to be tackled, we have to be sidelined by vehicle conversations.”