

Police Vehicles Sit Idle for Nearly Two Years Amid Persistent Violence and Officer Shortages

Following recent shootings and a wave of officer absences, senators are demanding immediate action on seven idle police vehicles, with some left sitting for nearly two years due to unresolved communications retrofits.

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Recent shooting incidents which resulted in [two fatalities on St. John](#) have amplified calls for a stronger police presence territory-wide. These public appeals coincided with a manpower shortage in the St. Thomas/St. John district, with a [cascade of officer absences](#) that began June 15 and severely disrupted public safety coverage, including shifts at festivals, schools, traffic enforcement, and patrol duties.

While calls for more boots on the ground continue, Senator Novelle Francis Jr., a former commissioner of the V.I. Police Department, drew the public's attention to a different issue: several police cars sitting outside the Department of Property and Procurement.

“Tell me all of them are gone where they need to be,” he urged of DPP Commissioner Lisa Alejandro, who appeared before the Committee on Budget, Appropriations, and Finance on Tuesday. Senator Francis, the committee's chair, was not pleased with the response from Assistant Commissioner Khalid Pickering.

“There are seven cars that are parked at DPP; no fault of DPP,” Mr. Pickering replied. Updates from the VIPD are that “Bronx Communication has some work left to do on those cars.” As of right now, Mr. Pickering said, “those cars are not retrofitted with all the equipment that the VIPD needs to operationalize those cars.”

The lawmaker declared the holdup “unacceptable.” As Francis observed, “these vehicles need to be out on the street doing police work and protecting this community. They serve no good purpose sitting at P&P....This has been close to two years!”

“It’s been way too long,” he continued. “We’re putting people on the moon and we can’t address this communication issue.” He recalled a similar situation years ago where batteries needed to be replaced after police cars sat stationary for an extended period of time. “We've got to do better than this,” Francis complained.

Senator Carla Joseph agreed. “We are having a lot of homicides. Our men and women in blue need this vital tool and equipment to do their work.” She encouraged the powers that be to “make it a priority.”

“We have a lot of people who are being victims of gun violence and we need to have our police presence very strong in our community now,” she pleaded.

Mr. Pickering was not able to provide a timeline by which the work is expected to be completed, but told lawmakers, “I know some funding discussions have taken place...and so Bronx Communication has to pick up the cost for the delay in processing these cars.”