

VIPD Clears Internal Affairs Backlog, but Use-of-Force Reviews Still Hinder Full Consent Decree Compliance

The July 2025 federal status report notes that while VIPD has closed its investigation backlog—mostly through administrative closures—delays in Level 4 use-of-force reviews remain a key obstacle to ending DOJ oversight tied to civil rights violations.

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The VIPD responds to an incident in Market Square, St. Thomas in Nov. 2023, as federal monitors continue evaluating use-of-force cases under the 2009 consent decree.

The July status report on the V.I. Police Department's ongoing efforts to come into compliance with a decades-old consent decree is optimistic about the progress being made.

Filed in District Court on July 21, the latest status report states that the backlog of investigations in the Internal Affairs Bureau has been cleared. This, the report says, “will help improve VIPD’s overall compliance with paragraph 71 of the consent decree, regarding the timely adjudication of complaints.” However, the independent monitoring team noted that much of the backlog consisted of older cases which were administratively closed. This means that a resolution, determination or finding was not reached when it came to the underlying complaint.

Meanwhile, VIPD continues to work on clarifying review requirements for Level 4 use of force. This has been a challenge for some time, as the VIPD itself admitted to the court during a [2023 progress update](#) that the lack of timeliness in completing use of force investigations is a “major stumbling block in achieving compliance.”

Despite the slow pace of progress in certain areas, the two-page report states that work is nevertheless proceeding steadily. “The United States supports VIPD’s ongoing efforts toward achieving full compliance,” it concludes.

The consent decree was established in March 2009 as a result of a federal lawsuit filed against the VIPD by the U.S. Department of Justice in response to alleged patterns and practices of civil rights violations. The federal government took action after the VIPD failed to fulfill required reforms following a 2004 investigation.