

Loss of Officers Pressures VIPD Operations as Law Enforcement Seen as ‘Dying Profession’ and Mainland Jobs Lure Recruits

VIPD has lost 45 employees this fiscal year while hiring just 16, a 25% workforce drop. Commissioner Brooks cites law enforcement as a “dying profession” and says better mainland job prospects are pulling recruits away, even as overtime costs decline.

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The V.I. Police Department is grappling with a steep manpower loss that has left the force 20 officers short this fiscal year, raising concerns about public safety and the department’s ability to meet operational demands.

On Wednesday, VIPD Commissioner Mario Brooks told members of the Senate Committee on Budget, Appropriations, and Finance that since October, 45 employees have departed — 13 resignations from St. Thomas, 14 from St. Croix, 15 retirements territory-wide, and three dismissals — while only 16 new hires have joined the ranks.

Committee chair Senator Novelle Francis underscored the magnitude of the loss, noting that 45 employees represents a quarter of VIPD's workforce. He pressed Commissioner Mario Brooks on "what type of services is being compromised." Mr. Brooks, however, maintained that despite the significant reduction in personnel, "there has not been a significant impact in how we've been fighting crime," citing the use of cameras, drones, and ShotSpotter technology as force multipliers. Still, he agreed with Senators Francis and Ray Fonseca that the attrition rate is "quite troubling."

Mr. Brooks attributed the loss of officers to multiple factors, including "better employment opportunities on the mainland," and stated that "law enforcement is a dying profession." To address recruitment challenges, VIPD is exploring a "detailed program identifying high school students and college students for a work program" to give young people "a feel for what law enforcement is about" and a "foot in the door." Incentives like bonuses for vested employees are also being considered.

The department has implemented a "multi-pronged approach" to recruitment and retention. Since 2024, 18 cadets have graduated from the Police Cadet Program, with three hired and two more expected to join soon. Additionally, three Police Auxiliaries have transitioned to full-time officers after completing their one-year probation. An "Employee Recognition Committee" was recently established to promote initiatives that recognize outstanding service, aimed at boosting morale and retention.

Overtime management remains another major focus. Commissioner Brooks opened his testimony with the news that overtime expenditure had been reduced by 36% compared to FY2024. As of July 24, 2025, VIPD had paid \$13,157,633 in overtime and expects the figure to reach \$15,549,930 by year's end — down from \$24,126,044 in FY2024. He credited "stricter oversight and improved procedures" for the savings, along with "commitment to accountability, strategic scheduling, and resource management" from leadership.

Senator Hubert Frederick welcomed the reduction but stressed the need for balance. "When you work overtime, yes, you should get paid, but be reasonable at the same time. We can't afford to pay everybody \$300,000," he said. Mr. Brooks explained that VIPD had conducted an "analysis of how overtime was being expended" and now requires all staff to "justify" their reason for overtime.

Not everyone on the committee shared the same enthusiasm. Senator Dwayne DeGraff, a former police officer, cautioned against cutting overtime too aggressively, warning, "When we cut down the overtime, you lose 20 officers. We have less officers on the road." Senator Kenneth Gittens voiced frustration over what he described as "untouchables" — employees with base salaries around \$70,000–\$80,000 making more than \$180,000–\$220,000 annually.

In FY2026, VIPD's general fund budget is \$73,339,167, with \$40,345,456 allocated to salaries and \$15,445,247 to fringe benefits. Supplies are budgeted at \$4,787,675, utilities at \$1,801,186, and other services at \$10,519,603. The department has also earmarked \$2,005,067 for compliance with its consent decree and expects to enter a monitoring period by the end of 2025, a goal that seems achievable given the [most recent status update](#) from the independent monitors tracking

VIPD progress.

In addition to its general fund allocation, VIPD will manage \$58.9 million in federal grants — a sum that prompted Senator Francis to remark, “I don’t ever want to hear you say you don’t have money.”

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