

## VIPD Admits Lapses in Camera Maintenance Hampered Investigations; Fixes Now in Place

**After admitting that overgrown trees, misaligned lenses, and unmonitored feeds left key surveillance cameras unusable in critical cases, including a St. John double homicide, VIPD says new monitoring and vendor maintenance plans will prevent future gaps.**

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In its push to combat crime, the V.I. Police Department has installed cameras territory-wide, relying on them for evidence in violent incidents. However, failure to maintain the physical infrastructure of the video surveillance network has created some challenges for the VIPD.

Commissioner Mario Brooks appeared before the Committee on Budget, Appropriations, and Finance this week and responded to questions from Senator Marvin Blyden about how the

cameras were being utilized in crime fighting. “There were some issues where the cameras were not initially being monitored,” Mr. Brooks admitted. He is on record as saying the VIPD was “only utilizing them when, in fact, something occurred in the area.”

Consequently, “we have things like trees growing up in front of the cameras,” he told Sen. Blyden. “They did not come to light that those cameras [were] out until you actually needed them,” Mr. Brooks admitted. Failure to conduct routine maintenance has also resulted in difficulties for VIPD investigations in at least one instance.

Blyden recalled that the camera near the scene of a [double homicide](#) on St. John was out of service. Brooks confirmed this.

Now, VIPD has “put measures in place,” including tasking personnel with the responsibility of monitoring the cameras. Individuals are also being trained to pull the relevant data from the cameras. An arrangement with the camera’s vendors has also been initiated. “Part of the maintenance plan is that the vendor will, in fact, support us by going out to this field and ensuring that those camera lenses are clean,” he noted. The vendor will also be responsible for ensuring cameras are accurately angled.

“I’m quite satisfied of where we are now. We’re going to get better,” promised Commissioner Brooks. Still, Sen. Blyden wanted firmer assurances that similar situations would not recur. “We have personnel. We’re monitoring them. We have a schedule that’s in place,” the VIPD commissioner declared. “They’ll be on shift. So if one individual misses it, the next shift should catch it.”

Mindful of the need to have round-the-clock monitoring of the cameras, committee chair Senator Novelle Francis offered a potential solution. “I’ve been discussing this in terms of getting even some of our disabled population to support and assist us in monitoring the cameras,” he shared. Sen. Francis has promised to have an offline discussion with Commissioner Brooks to further flesh out the idea.