

The Virgin Islands Consortium

VIPD Officers Stage Sick-Out on St. Croix Over Unsafe Vehicles and Equipment Shortages

Reports of a sick-out left St. Croix residents uneasy as VIPD officers protested unsafe conditions, including worn tires and incomplete patrol cars. Chief Cornelius said days off were canceled and specialized units deployed to keep the streets covered.

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New VIPD units seen driving on Hess Road, St. Croix, August 19, 2025, amid concerns over idle vehicles awaiting retrofitting and equipment. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM.

Residents of St. Croix were urged to remain cautious this weekend after reports surfaced on social media that officers of the V.I. Police Department had staged a sick-out in

protest of poor working conditions. Concerns centered on vehicles in unsafe condition and other equipment issues that officers said hindered their ability to carry out duties.

The VIPD was slow to respond to the public concern, with most of Saturday passing without an official statement. As of 7:20 p.m., no press release had been issued. However, St. Croix Chief of Police Uston Cornelius later confirmed the situation in comments to the Consortium, providing details about the sick-out and the department's response.

"Yes, we had some concerns from the men and women in blue," Cornelius acknowledged. "Yes, we are taking steps to try and address some of the issues or concern that the officers brought forward... Yes, we had some individuals that were scheduled to come in, and apparently, it seems to be many of them that call sick."

Cornelius said once the department realized what was transpiring, leadership canceled officers' days off to cover shifts and ensure that public safety was not compromised. "We canceled days off so that we could make sure that our streets and our community stays safe. Right now we have the officers from the Special Operations Bureau and the other specialized units out here protecting our community," he said.

When asked if the department had enough manpower on the streets, Cornelius said, "We have adequate numbers to man the street right now... We just double check tonight when the shift comes in to make sure that everything is where we want it to be, and then we will be back on track."

The chief explained that officers' complaints included vehicle maintenance delays. "We have to be waiting to have vendors paid to have certain situations taken care of," he said. He pointed specifically to tires and batteries. "The officers don't want to drive vehicles with the tread showing," he said, noting that worn tires compromise officer safety. "And that is the way it's supposed to be. We can't expect citizens to drive safely if we are not doing the same."

Chief Cornelius noted that while new vehicles have been purchased, many lack required equipment and remain incomplete. "Rather than have the vehicles sit, we wanted to make sure that the officers had more up-to-date vehicles to move around while they saw the community. But in between trying to get the vehicles out after this lengthy time, what happened is, some of the items that should have been in the vehicle is not there, and we're trying to get that taken care of," he explained.

Some of these same vehicles, Cornelius added, had been parked at Property and Procurement in St. Thomas for a protracted period. "Those are the vehicles that we brought over hoping that we could have the officers in more comfortable than driving in the older vehicles, but they wanted to make sure that the items that should be in there are in there, and that is where we are right now."

Asked whether officers would report for the next shift, Cornelius said measures were being taken to ensure coverage. "We have put some measures in place, and that's where we are right now," he said.

Cornelius emphasized his commitment to protecting the community despite the challenges. “Yes, we live in this community. I live in this community. I have family members in this community, and I would never, ever want your family to get hurt, because I don’t want mine to get hurt. So I always try my best to make sure, if I want something for my family, that you [get] the same thing.”

The issue of vehicles sitting idle has been a long-running point of contention. [In a July 3, 2025 article](#) published by The Consortium, lawmakers pressed the VIPD on why several new police cars had been parked at the Department of Property and Procurement for nearly two years without being placed into service. During a budget hearing, Senator Novelle Francis Jr. demanded answers, telling DPP Commissioner Lisa Alejandro, “Tell me all of them are gone where they need to be.”

Assistant Commissioner Khalid Pickering explained at the time that “there are seven cars that are parked at DPP; no fault of DPP. Bronx Communication has some work left to do on those cars. As of right now, those cars are not retrofitted with all the equipment that the VIPD needs to operationalize those cars.”

Senator Francis called the holdup “unacceptable,” arguing that “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!”

He added, “It’s been way too long. We’re putting people on the moon and we can’t address this communication issue,” recalling a similar situation years ago when unused cars needed replacement batteries after sitting idle. “We’ve got to do better than this.”

Senator Carla Joseph echoed those concerns, pointing to the urgency of getting working vehicles to officers. “We are having a lot of homicides. Our men and women in blue need this vital tool and equipment to do their work,” she said. “We need to make it a priority.”