

The Virgin Islands Consortium

VIPD Expands Cameras, Drones and License Plate Readers as Lawmakers Push for More Foot Patrols

VIPD confirmed its Real Time Crime Center infrastructure is in place and drones will launch under a new response program, even as senators call for more uniformed officers on downtown streets.

Crime / **Published On February 14, 2026 10:07 AM /**

Nelcia Charlemagne **February 14, 2026**



The V.I. Police Department is hopeful that a series of technological advancements will help strengthen its crime fighting efforts and maintain safety across the territory.

On Friday, Assistant Commissioner Sean Santos provided a series of updates, noting that VIPD “remains on schedule with several major initiatives designed to strengthen investigative capacity, officer safety, inter-agency coordination, and community protection.”

Among them is the territory-wide camera system expansion, and the Flock License Plate Reader System. Now fully operational, the System enhances VIPD’s ability to “identify stolen vehicles and vehicles linked to violent crimes.” In the ongoing pilot phase, VIPD will assess accuracy.

According to Mr. Santos, the physical infrastructure build-out of the Real Time Crime Center in both districts has reached a “significant milestone.” Hardware and monitoring stations have been installed, among other preparations. Both districts now have the “foundational hardware infrastructure required to support centralized, data-driven policing operations.” The department is now executing phase two, the assistant commissioner made known.

The second phase of the project includes the launch of the Drone as a First Responder (DFR) Program. This, Mr. Santos told lawmakers, will “provide rapid aerial situational awareness” and “enhance officer safety during high-risk responses.” VIPD also anticipates that using the drones will “reduce response times” and “improve search operations.”

He assured Senator Ray Fonseca that the use of the drones will not infringe on individual rights to privacy. “We’re just using the drone for different type of operations that are outside of any type of violation of privacy of residents.” To date, drones have been used to assess “traffic issues.”

VIPD is also executing plans to upgrade individual officer-carried equipment. The procurement phase for body-worn cameras and tasers is ongoing. The modernization “aligns with national best practices in constitutional policing and use-of-force documentation,” Mr. Santos explained.

On a larger scale, the police department is finalizing the scope of work for the Traffic Light Enforcement Program. It will be designed to address red-light violations, improve roadway safety, reduce intersection-related collisions, and provide “automated enforcement capabilities.”

VIPD, Mr. Santos said, “remains committed to leveraging technology responsibly and strategically to serve and protect the people of the territory.”

While lawmakers were pleased with the integration of technology, there were concerns about the associated vulnerabilities. Senator Angel Bolques Jr. raised questions about cybersecurity efforts. Aware of [recent ransomware attacks](#), Mr. Santos said it is “definitely something that we are pushing forward in protecting our software.”

Alongside technological advances and the related safeguards, there were calls for the incorporation of more traditional policing tactics into the VIPD’S crimefighting strategy.

Sen. Bolques was the first to ask VIPD’s leadership to increase foot patrols territory-wide. “I thought that foot patrolling was very effective [and] kept me out of trouble,” he said. Mr.

Santos agreed that they have “always been effective” and agreed that “it’s important that police officers are in touch with the community members.”

VIPD is currently recruiting new police officers. Additional manpower would bolster foot patrol efforts.

“We’re not foot patrolling,” later agreed Senator Clifford Joseph, the committee's chair. “I think the visibility needs to be in place...I’m just saying that out of sight is out of mind,” he told Mr. Santos.

“People tend to start to behave out of control when we see less blues,” he observed. Senator Joseph called on VIPD to “lessen the vehicles.” Aware of manpower challenges, he nevertheless maintained that the police department could “plan a strategy.”

Senator Kenneth Gittens continued the appeal for foot patrols in the downtown areas. He informed his colleagues that he has been requesting a redeployment strategy from the VIPD for some time. “Unless they redeploy, we can’t put them out there, because, truthfully, the police department don’t have the manpower that we had ten, fifteen years ago,” the former police officer explained.

Officers, he said, will simply “have to get out of the comfort zone, out of these special assignments” and instead get “real boots on the ground.”

Senator Kurt Violet, for his part, pleaded with VIPD to ensure that officers on foot patrol are fully uniformed. “I could see you in a crowd,” he said, recalling the distinct appearance of the police uniform. “[If] I’m going to do something, I think twice because I know there’s an officer down there,” he said, noting that a uniformed officer acts as a deterrent. “You guys have gotten so relaxed,” he lamented.

Per Mr. Santos, the uniform discrepancies are related to an updated uniform, made from new material. VIPD’s Human Resources division is “working on getting the uniforms in,” Assistant Commissioner Santos explained. Police officers will soon be required to be fitted and assigned the new uniform. Though the color remains the same, chief and command staff uniforms will change, he noted.