

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Seventeen Federal Law Enforcement Officers On St. Croix Receive Commissions As USVI Peace Officers

Government / **Published On April 24, 2017 11:46 PM /**

Staff **April 24, 2017**



ST. CROIX -- - Seventeen federal law enforcement officers received commissions as Virgin Islands Peace Officers today after attending an orientation on Virgin Islands history and culture at Government House on St. Croix, V.I. Department of Justice Public Media Officer Corliss Smithen announced Monday.

Commissions were awarded to six agents from the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), five from the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) and six from Homeland Security Investigations (HSI).

Attorney General Claude Earl Walker said, "This is our largest class of federal officers who have received VI Peace Officer status, which is as large as some of the local police academy classes. We now have 26 officers in total since we started. This is one of the most significant law enforcement initiatives in recent history, and as time goes by, the people of the Virgin Islands will see the benefits of this undertaking."

The training was planned by Mr. Walker in conjunction with Acting U.S. Attorney Joycelyn Hewlett and VIPD Commissioner Delroy Richards. Acting U.S. Attorney Hewlett and Commissioner Richards were present at the orientation ceremony. Chief Deputy AG, Joseph Ponteent, stood in for Mr. Walker who was attending [a press conference](#) with Gov. Kenneth Mapp.

During the ceremony, Dr. Olasee Davis, a noted Virgin Islands historian and cultural icon, highlighted significant aspects of St. Croix's history from a military perspective.

cant aspects of St. Croix's history from a military perspective. "In 1917, the island was governed by the military," Dr. Davis said. "There were improvements in infrastructure and sanitation, but the relationship with the locals wasn't there until David Hamilton Jackson and others fought until the military was out in the 1930s..."

At the end of the orientation, Mr. Richards and Chief Deputy AG Ponteent presented each federal officer with a commission. Mr. Richards said he believes the changes are for the betterment of the islands.

"There are folks who don't like the interventions of the federal agencies, but I welcome anybody in that's involved in law enforcement to these islands because it helps me," Mr. Richards said. "It's not my fight alone; it's our fight."

Acting U.S. Attorney Hewlett also gave brief remarks.

"I just want to thank the Commissioner, the Attorney General's office and the agents for showing up today and finally getting this done," she said. "I think that when we work together, there's strength in co-operation, so I think that we can do more through co-operation..."

An act of the Virgin Islands Legislature, Title 23 Virgin Islands Code § 3, enacted on Sept. 17, 2012, has granted authority to the Commissioner of the Virgin Islands Police Department to issue commissions as Virgin Islands Peace Officers to certain federal law enforcement officers of certain federal agencies. The Legislature provided that law enforcement officers of the following federal agencies may be commissioned as Virgin Islands Peace Officers – Federal Bureau of Investigation; Drug Enforcement Administration; U.S. Customs and Border Protection; Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms; U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement; U.S. Marshals Services; and U.S. Coast Guard.

The U.S. Attorney's Office, the VI Attorney General's Office and the VI Police Department entered into a written Memorandum of Understanding on the procedures to be followed on the issuance and revocation of commissions and the respective rights and responsibilities of the parties. A federal law enforcement officer who is granted a commission is recognized and authorized to act as a Virgin Islands Peace Officer to enforce local laws in the Virgin Islands, including the power to make arrests for violation

of Virgin Islands laws. Any federal law enforcement officer granted a commission may use any reasonable force which the officer reasonably believes to be necessary to defend himself, or another person, from bodily harm, while making a lawful arrest.

In addition, reasonable force may also be used, when necessary, to arrest any felon fleeing from justice, when the officer reasonably believes either that the fleeing felon poses a threat of death or serious physical harm to the officer or others or that the fleeing felon has committed a crime involving the infliction or threatened infliction of serious physical harm to another person.

During a similar exercise conducted on St. Thomas on April 10, nine federal law enforcement officers received commissions as Virgin Islands Peace Officers.