

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Attorney General Clears Police Officer Of Allegation Brought By Senator Janelle Sarauw

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Janelle Sarauw

ST. THOMAS -- Attorney General Claude Walker has cleared Police Officer Tianna Hunt of any wrongdoing after it was alleged by Senator Janelle Sarauw that Ms. Hunt had pulled her police-issued firearm on the senator while Ms. Sarauw was at the officer's residence.

Following a press conference held at the Department of Justice here on Monday relative to a [consumer settlement announcement](#), The Consortium asked the attorney general

about the status of his investigation.

"I have reviewed the evidence and held a meeting with the senator and the officer, and concluded that no probable cause exists to file any charge against Officer Hunt," Mr. Walker said. "The officer did not act inappropriately. The parties were so advised."

Mr. Walker added, "V.I.P.D. has a longstanding policy requiring an officer to de-escalate a confrontation prior to displaying a weapon, and upon review, the officer did not do anything wrong. The officer was in her house."

V.I.P.D. Commissioner Delroy Richards told The Consortium late Monday that he was not sure whether the V.I.P.D.'s own internal investigation had concluded. However, he said he would give an update on Tuesday. He did confirm that Ms. Hunt was still on leave with pay.

In March, Mr. Richards told The Consortium that the incident occurred at Officer Hunt's residence during the afternoon of Saturday, March 24, and involved three females — Ms. Hunt, Ms. Sarauw and another individual. Mr. Richards said Ms. Sarauw had alleged that during the altercation, Ms. Hunt brandished her firearm.

But according to a police report filed against Ms. Sarauw on January 14, the altercation with the senator was not the first. The January 14 filing alleged that the senator was pounding on Ms. Hunt's window at 1:15 a.m. in regards to another female individual.

In a statement issued on Sunday, March 25, Ms. Sarauw sought to keep the incident away from her job as a senator, stating that her personal life had no relevance to the work she performs on behalf of the people of the Virgin Islands.

"This is personal and it has no bearing on how I perform my job. That is my personal life and in no way will I allow my personal life to interfere with the work I have to do on behalf of the people," read the statement. "The Virgin Islands is still in recovery from two [Category 5] hurricanes. People need roofs and windows and a home, not to hear skewed details of my personal life. We all have a personal life that may take different turns and we all have to go to work anyway. I plan to do the same."

It was not clear what the skewed details about Ms. Sarauw's life were, but the police report filed against the senator on January 14, delved into what appeared to be relational issues. Part of the Jan. 14 report alleged that Ms. Sarauw, who had visited Officer Hunt's residence after 1:00 a.m. on January 14 and stood outside pounding on Officer Hunt's windows and hurling insults, was told to leave several times. But, according to the police report filed by Officer Hunt, Ms. Sarauw did not leave; instead, she walked around the home to Ms. Hunt's bedroom window and started cursing and shouting several times: "You really going to choose this bitch over me?"

The Consortium obtained two videos that show Ms. Sarauw outside the residence of Ms. Hunt even as Ms. Hunt can be heard in the video on several occasions asking Ms. Sarauw to leave. On both occasions, Ms. Sarauw was seeking the attention of the other female individual involved.

According to Mr. Walker, generally, a police officer may display a police-issued firearm if the officer reasonably perceives there to be danger. In such cases, "it is legal [for an

officer] to draw the police-issued weapon, Mr. Walker said.

He said there are use of force guidelines and V.I.P.D. officers are given regular exercises and lectures, "but in the end, whether to display a firearm cannot be solely confined to the dictates of a specific rule, rather, in large part, it is based on the officer's judgement," Mr. Walker said.

"It is an officer's individual judgement that must be justifiable, and so it comes down to a reasonable exercise of discretion based on facts," he said.

Mr. Richards said the V.I.P.D.'s internal investigation into such matters takes into consideration the decade-long federal consent decree that the V.I.P.D. was placed under.