

The Virgin Islands Consortium

After More Than 9 Years, Federal Judge 'Essentially' Lifts Consent Decree From V.I.P.D.

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After being under a federally mandated consent decree from since 2009, the Virgin Islands Police Department on Wednesday achieved a great feat under the leadership of outgoing Commissioner Delroy Richards: District Court Judge Curtis Gomez essentially lifted the consent decree from the police force, stating that the V.I.P.D. was finally substantially in compliance with the conditions imposed by the court following a U.S. Department of Justice lawsuit citing matters including excessive force and inadequate procedures for filing civilian complaints.

The consent decree is a cooperative effort between the Government of the Virgin Islands, the V.I.P.D. and U.S. D.O.J. that was created to bring a common commitment to

Constitutional policing, police integrity, and preventing conduct that deprives persons of rights and privileges secured by the Constitution or federal law.

"I would like to congratulate Commissioner Delroy Richards, Assistant Commissioner Curtis Griffin and all those that worked with us to bring about important improvements at the Virgin Islands Police Department," said Governor Kenneth Mapp, who organized a team that has been working to address compliance issues, according to Government House. "This is great news for the department and the territory. We have made real progress."

Mr. Richards said both Judge Gomez and the U.S. Department of Justice were pleased with the V.I.P.D.'s efforts.

"This consent decree has been hanging over V.I.P.D. for almost a decade; we inherited this consent decree," the commissioner said. "But we put a plan in place and we were successful. The judge has essentially lifted the decree from V.I.P.D., though there will be some follow-up monitoring over the next two years to ensure continued compliance."

Territorial Police Chief Winsbut McFarlande told The Consortium during [a recent V.I.P.C. interview](#) that the two years of additional monitoring will serve to "ensure that the culture and the habits are changed into 21st century policing."

In July 2016, consent decree monitor Palmer Wilson [explained](#) to The Consortium that the consent decree has over 100 paragraphs that have been broken down into sub paragraphs. Of the one hundred, fifty-three pertains to the operations of the police department, or as Mr. Wilson puts it, "about how the police officers do their jobs." Of the fifty-three paragraphs, two are considered inapplicable to compliance, and of the remaining fifty-one paragraphs, the V.I.P.D. in 2016 was in compliance with 31.