

Three Police Unions Issue Letter of No Confidence in Police Commissioner, Call for His Immediate Removal

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Police Commissioner Trevor Velinor. By. VI LEGISLATURE

Three police unions have written a joint letter of no confidence in Police Commissioner Trevor Velinor to Governor Albert Bryan, an action that comes on the heels of [a violent weekend on St. Thomas](#), which built upon months of incessant crime that has led to 43 homicides so far in the USVI for 2020.

The letter, which was obtained by the Consortium this morning, also calls for the removal of Mr. Velinor from the police commissioner position "post haste," with the three unions listing a surfeit of what they deem deficiencies with Mr. Velinor's leadership. The unions include the Enforcement Supervisors Union, Locals 118 and 119, the Policeman's Benevolent Association, and the Police

Benevolent Association Locals 1910 STX. The letter was signed by the three union heads.

"It is important you understand, this action is not one we take lightly. Our loyalty lies with VIPD and our dedication and commitment to the law enforcement profession that safeguards our community," the unions wrote. "We are cognizant VIPD is experiencing an increase response to brazen acts of gun violence; questions regarding its ability to maintain substantial compliance with the consent decree; and the continued exodus of senior personnel to retirement and junior officers to resignation. In addition, there was much trepidation on our part in that if there is no change in VIPD's executive leadership, there will be retaliation against the leaders of this effort. We do, however, stand 100 percent behind this decision to speak out."

The unions said that following their meeting with Governor Bryan on September 14 to discuss their grievances, they had hoped Mr. Velinor would have taken action with the aim of boosting morale and improving the V.I.P.D.'s efficiency, which they said would in turn build trust in the commissioner's ability to lead the department.

"To the contrary, since that meeting, Commissioner Velinor has become more hostile and condescending to our membership especially those who met with you or oppose his failed leadership decisions," the unions wrote.

The unions added, "Since his appointment, Commissioner Velinor has been solely interested in promoting his experience as a federal agent and showcasing his self-perceived intellect. He approached department personnel with a "higher than mighty" persona and surrounded himself with individuals who responded to his beck and call, while he overlooked quality experience, managerial strengths, and weaknesses. He has never had a coordinated plan for moving the department forward. He has, however, been more interested in advocating for "his" crime fighting initiative. Commissioner Velinor has gone as far as fudging the success of his initiative by attributing arrests and illegal firearm recoveries from other units to his initiative. His actions have totally disheartened the majority of sworn personnel and all but extinguished morale that was already at a dismal level.

"Publicly Commissioner Velinor appears supportive of department personnel by thanking them for the job they do. Conversely, in department meetings and on calls, he openly ridicules personnel for their performance. He is constantly degrading supervisors by referring to them as mediocre, subpar, or incompetent. His criticism often occurs regardless of who is in attendance or hear the conversation. Commissioner Velinor also uses the petty authority of transfer to force those with dissenting opinions into compliance with his "my way or the highway" mentality. He is clearly suffering from a power issue. He constantly reminds staff he is the Police Commissioner and they will abide by his decisions. Unfortunately, most of his decisions do not benefit VIPD's efficiency or effectiveness."

Mr. Velinor defended his leadership during a press briefing the V.I.P.D. held today to address the St. Thomas shootings. He said contrary to the unions' arguments, he was implementing positive change, which Mr. Velinor contended has made many within the department uncomfortable.

"From a law enforcement perspective and a leadership perspective, when you hold people accountable, there's always going to be pushback. When you start demanding that people work, demonstrate professionalism, there's going to be pushback. When you start disciplining consistent

with the metrics, there's going to be pushback. When you start complying with the consent decree and their demand that everyone adhere to the protocols established, there's going to be pushback. When you start doing right and saying you got to get out your car and walk the beat, and touch the flesh, and take the tints off, there's going to be push back.

"When you start telling people that their personal cars, like the government-issued cars need to have the same requirement as their enforcement measures — you can't issue tickets to people on the streets for having dark tint, while your personal car can't see within as police officers — there's going to be pushback. Again, part of what we do is hold ourselves accountable and hold others accountable," Mr. Velinor said.

The unions complained that the commissioner is always leaving the territory and that he is disengaged with the community. Mr. Velinor confirmed to the Consortium in a phone call that he is currently out of the territory. However, for the 15 months he has been employed as a commissioner, he has only been out an accumulative 12 days. The commissioner also said that though he has been out of the USVI on a number of occasions, he has never taken a day off. "Since September 2019 to now, October 26, 2020, Trevor Velinor has not taken one day off of work. So whether I'm sitting in Mars Hill, sitting at my home, sitting at A Command in St. Thomas, or wherever it is that I'm working out of, I do the same work," he said.

The unions continued with their criticism, assailing Mr. Velinor for what they said has been the lack of a plan to move the department forward. "In over fourteen months on the job he has not provided any type of plan. His crime fighting initiative is just that, an initiative, not a plan. In addition, he has continually placed emphasis for the department's inability to solve or curb violent crimes on the community. This is due to his lack of a plan, so it is easier to cast blame elsewhere. He has approached personnel about recommendations to aid the department, but due to his tumultuous relationship, officers and supervisors with credible recommendations refuse to share them with him," the unions said.

Governor Bryan did not return a request for comment on the matter.

To close, the unions said, "Please be mindful we are not a group of complainers or disgruntled employees. We are the members of VIPD's four police unions committed to carrying out our sworn duties. Our loyalty to the VIPD coupled with our dedication to the citizens of the Territory is the driving force behind our decision to coin this difficult letter. Our agenda is strictly based on improving the welfare of the Virgin Islands Police Department so that we as employees may provide the greatest level of service to the much deserving members of this community.

"Based on the forgoing, we submit this Letter of No Confidence in Police Commissioner Trevor Velinor. We respectfully request Police Commissioner Trevor Velinor be removed *posthaste*, as Police Commissioner of the Virgin Islands Police Department."

There was one union president who did not sign the letter. Police Sergeant Jamale Griffin, current president of LESU Local #119, said while he would not have signed the letter calling for Mr.

Velinor's removal, he agrees that most of the people the commissioner has placed in leadership positions must be replaced.

See the letter [here](#).