

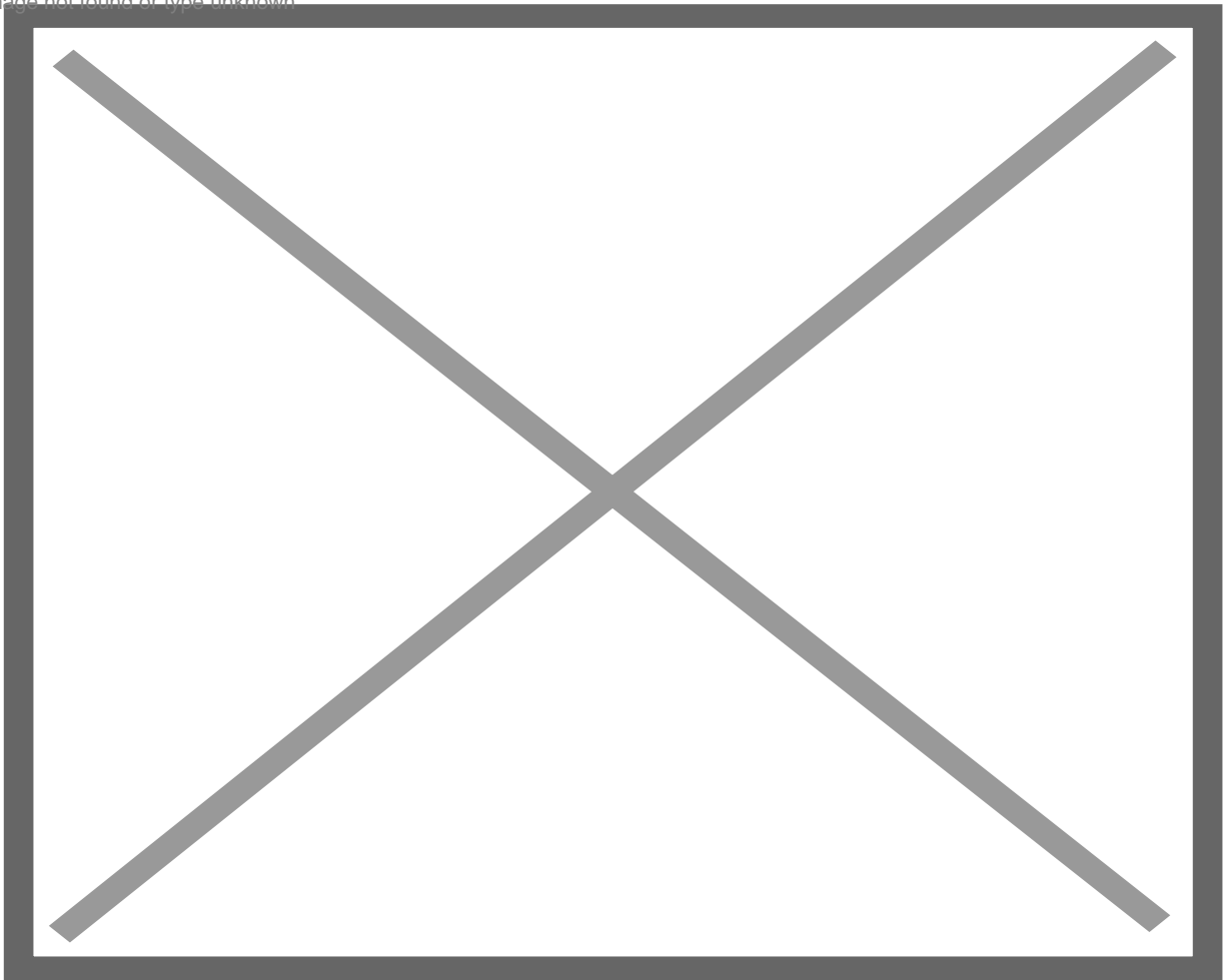
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Camera System to Help Fight Crime Delayed as Agreement With WAPA to Charge Poles Has Yet to be Reached

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Ernice Gilbert **June 23, 2021**

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Senators last week called into question the urgency of the Bryan administration in getting cameras aimed at fighting crime in the territory installed and activated, as a July 27 date of completion has been delayed to September for the earliest, because an agreement with the V.I. Water and Power Authority to energize the poles on which the cameras are being installed had not been reached.

That's according to outgoing Police Commissioner Trevor Velinor, speaking during the V.I.P.D.'s budget hearing last Thursday. He said the camera system will not meet its completion date because "we've ran into some issues regarding charging the actual poles so we've been working with WAPA. We're now in progress on that end."

He also said the USVI needs a lot more cameras than the amount currently being installed to get the desired coverage. According to the commissioner, phase one of the project sees the installation of 104 cameras in forty locations for a projected scope of work cost of \$900,000, while phase two includes 217 cameras and a projected cost of \$1.5 million. "I could see a Virgin Islands where we have a lot more cameras," Mr. Velinor said.

Kishauna Tweede, V.I.P.D. Information Technology Bureau director, said the projected date of completion is "tentatively around the end of September if we don't acquire any more delays to the project. If we acquire delays then of course the project will be delayed more."

Asked by Senator Kurt Vialet whether an agreement to charge the poles had been reached with WAPA, Ms. Tweede said, "The agreement with WAPA is not completed yet. We've sent communication to WAPA requesting approval."

Mr. Vialet, frustrated by the matter, called for urgency in the rollout of the camera system. "Some of these things are just so frustrating. A camera system is going to help the police department immensely. This should be urgent. There should be urgency to get this done. The executive branch should be making sure that any entity that is involved in this get it down as quickly as possible. St. Croix has almost 20 murders, some of them in broad daylight with cars driving. If we had a camera system you could pinpoint. Why is there not a sense of urgency to get this done, I just don't understand," Mr. Vialet said.

He added, "We're still waiting for agreement with WAPA. WAPA don't know the urgency to be able to energize a camera? We can't come to an agreement and fast-track this to reduce the murders in the Virgin Islands? Because these guys are just going out there blatantly in the daytime."

Mr. Vialet said part of the funding for the project has been in place for three years. "We have to develop a sense of urgency and a drop-dead date and get it implemented. This is a part of keeping the Virgin Islands economy moving," he said.

Ms. Tweede said once the poles are energized the cameras will go live "automatically." She said there were also some integration with the Bureau of Information Technology that needed to take place for certain poles on St. Croix.

Mr. Vialet said while the commissioner of the V.I.P.D. does not control any other arm of government that may be involved in the installation of the systems, "When you have executive level meetings, this is urgent so you're supposed to have all of those individuals there in a room and you develop a plan within a couple hours as to how you're going to energize what B.I.T. need to do and lay it out."

He called on Gov't House to host an emergency meeting with B.I.T., Public Works, WAPA and the Police Department to get the project done. "It is very simple," Mr. Vialet stated.

Mr. Velinor also revealed that the police department has in its budget \$300,000 for body-worn cameras. The commissioner was responding to a question from Senator Carla Joseph, who pointed to the consent decree the police department is currently under, part of which includes provisions against excessive force.

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