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# Some Surveillance Cameras Are Already Active; Violet Says Initiative Can't Be Kept Secret: Criminals Need to Know They Are Being Watched

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With the Virgin Islands already experiencing twenty-six homicides in 2021, surveillance camera installation, a major initiative in the effort to curtail crime in the USVI is seen as an important step, and Bureau of Information Technology Director Rupert Ross on Tuesday said the effort was well underway.

In response to a question from Sen. Kurt Violet, who chairs the Finance Committee in which the Tuesday budget hearing was held, Mr. Ross said, "Some of the cameras are online already... they came on in the last couple of weeks."

Former police commissioner and current Senator Novelle Francis sought to learn more about the implementation when he asked Mr. Ross about the "end game" of the initiative. Mr. Ross responded, "I am not in the public safety business."

Dissatisfied, Mr. Francis fired back, "Let's pin it right there, because the ones that continue to make the decisions regarding surveillance cameras are not in the public safety business either. They are making decisions outside of the public safety business... if we are going to talk about the upstart of safety cameras it has to be for a purpose."

Mr. Ross then said, "What I want to say is I don't speak for public safety. However, we work very closely with them in identifying the locations for the cameras." He explained that B.I.T. was told which cameras to install based on priority, and that B.I.T. makes technology suggestions such as license plate readers.

Mr. Violet sought to learn about a system for monitoring, where those monitors would be housed and adequate staffing.

"The monitoring is set up already and how it is going to be monitored it is going to be a function of the Virgin Islands Police Department," Mr. Ross stated.

Mr. Violet said keeping the initiative secret defeats the purpose. "This is a crime-fighting tool and at some point everything with it needs to be organized where the police department can come out and say our camera system is up and running," Mr. Violet said. He said the police department should be able to say, "We are able to track you. We have staff that's looking at the cameras on a regular basis..."

"It can't be the best kept secret... the criminal element needs to know that we are serious," he added.

[At a Senate hearing](#) in June, Kishauna Tweede, V.I.P.D. Information Technology Bureau director, said the projected date of completion was "tentatively around the end of September if we don't acquire any more delays to the project."

She added, "If we acquire delays then of course the project will be delayed more."