

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Update: Female Officers Involved in Fight Placed on Leave; Police Commissioner Criticizes Union President

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Police Commissioner Ray Martinez. By. THE VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT.

Update: Sept. 10, 2022 at 6:54 a.m.: The two female police officers in St. Thomas involved in an assault incident at the Richard Callwood Command Police Station have been placed on leave pending the outcome of an investigation. The officers will continue to receive their salary while the probe unfolds, the V.I. Police Department has confirmed to the Consortium.

Original Story: The president of the Policeman's Benevolent Union has filed a grievance with Office of the Police Commissioner calling for two female officers who were involved

in a fight at the Richard Callwood Command Police Station to be placed on leave pending a thorough investigation.

Union President Hadiya Casimir, in a notice to the media, said the Aug. 31 incident has placed other officers in danger because the officers involved in the fight are armed individuals who are still allowed at police facilities after the incident. Because of this, the union filed a Level III Class Action Grievance with the V.I. Police Department and has called for immediate action to remedy the situation.

Both officers have filed police reports against each other, with one reporting a felony assault while the other reported a misdemeanor assault. According to the grievance document, one of the officers had to be transported to the Schneider Regional Medical Center and was treated for injuries by a doctor after allegedly being strangled from behind.

The grievance says the V.I.P.D.'s acting director of Internal Affairs, Vivianne Newton, who is well aware of the incident, has failed to take the necessary action to protect the police department. "This matter is a Class 1 case to be investigated by Internal Affairs, and these officers are required to be on administrative leave pending investigation into this serious matter. However, once again, Internal Affairs has violated its own protocol and the Department's rules, policy and procedures as it pertains reporting, reviewing and investigating use of force involving police officers," the grievance document reads.

IT further states, "These officers are armed with firearms and the safety of all members are currently in jeopardy. If anything is to escalate further due to the negligence and failure of the Department to take the necessary actions in lieu of this matter, the union will hold the Virgin Islands Police Department liable and responsible for failure to safeguard its police officers.

Among the actions sought by the union are the following:

- Officers involved must be placed on leave
- Officers involved should receive a Fit for Duty Evaluation
- The V.I. Police Department must adhere to its own policy and procedures
- Recuse Acting Dir. of Internal Affairs, Vivianne Netwon from being part of the investigation "as one of the officers involved is her very close friend and biases must be removed from all investigations to ensure impartiality, consistency, and fairness," according to the grievance document.

Police Commissioner Ray Martinez told the Consortium Friday morning that the matter is currently under investigation, and now that the grievance has been filed with his office, he will step in. "You have to have these different levels because at the end of the day I am the final say," he said, explaining why due process is critical when such matters arise.

"That is why we have the Office of the Chief that responds to these matters. It is important that the police commissioner's office, who has the ultimate responsibility of rendering a final decision, must maintain its impartiality," Mr. Martinez added. "To that

end, I have allowed the Internal Affairs Unit and the Office of the Chief to run their investigation and to oversee this matter."

The commissioner also criticized the union for taking the matter public, contending that the Police Department was not given adequate opportunity to respond to the grievance. "There is more in the mortar than the pestle when it comes to this union president," Mr. Martinez said, meaning there's more to this situation than is being told to the public. See the grievance document [here](#).