

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY, JUSTICE AND
PUBLIC SAFETY

08/04/2026-SPECIAL ORDERED TO THE FLOOR

BILL NO. 36-0332

Thirty-Sixth Legislature of the Virgin Islands

July 21, 2026

An act creating a temporary law enforcement integration initiative to increase police manpower, enhance public safety operations, and reduce violent crime throughout the Virgin Islands

PROPOSED BY: Senators Kenneth L. Gittens and Franklin D. Johnson
Sponsors: Angel L. Bolques, Jr., Dwayne M. DeGraff, Ray Fonseca,
Milton E. Potter, Novelle E. Francis, Jr., Marvin A. Blyden,
Clifford A. Joseph, Sr., Avery L. Lewis, Kurt A. Vialet,
Hubert L. Frederick and Alma Francis Heyliger

1 **WHEREAS**, the Government of the Virgin Islands has a fundamental responsibility to
2 protect the lives, safety, and property of residents and visitors throughout the Virgin Islands;

3 **WHEREAS**, the Virgin Islands has experienced an alarming increase in violent crime,
4 including homicides, shootings, armed robberies, carjackings, and firearm-related offenses;

5 **WHEREAS**, approximately 22 homicides have occurred throughout the Virgin Islands
6 during the current year, with incidents occurring in both the St. Croix district and the St.
7 Thomas-St. John district;

8 **WHEREAS**, approximately seven homicides occurred within a span of ten days,
9 reflecting an unacceptable escalation of violent criminal activity;

1 **WHEREAS**, numerous reports of armed robberies and carjackings have heightened
2 concerns among residents, businesses, and visitors regarding public safety;

3 **WHEREAS**, testimony, public statements, and operational assessments indicate that
4 district police commanders continue to face manpower shortages that limit their ability to
5 provide adequate patrol coverage and proactive policing operations;

6 **WHEREAS**, various agencies and instrumentalities of the Government of the Virgin
7 Islands employ certified law enforcement officers possessing arrest powers and law
8 enforcement training;

9 **WHEREAS**, the Legislature of the Virgin Islands finds that during periods of elevated
10 violent crime, the Government should maximize the deployment of available sworn law
11 enforcement personnel to public-facing operational assignments;

12 **WHEREAS**, the Legislature further finds that temporarily integrating available
13 territorial law enforcement resources under a unified command structure will increase police
14 visibility, strengthen crime suppression efforts, improve response capabilities, and enhance
15 public confidence in law enforcement; and

16 **WHEREAS**, this act is intended as a temporary emergency public safety measure and
17 may not be construed as permanently altering the structure or authority of any territorial law
18 enforcement agency; Now, Therefore,

19 ***Be it enacted by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands:***

20 **SECTION 1.** (a) There is established a Temporary Law Enforcement Integration
21 Initiative for the purpose of increasing law enforcement visibility, enhancing public safety
22 operations, reducing violent crime, and maximizing the utilization of available law enforcement

personnel throughout the Virgin Islands. This initiative remains effective for an initial period of 90 days and may be extended as provided under subsection (f)(2).

(b) Certified law enforcement officers employed by an independent agency or autonomous instrumentality of the Government of the Virgin Islands may be assigned only through a written agreement between the Virgin Islands Police Department and the agency or entity that employs the officer and are temporarily assigned to the operational command of the Commissioner of the Virgin Islands Police Department. All officers assigned under this act shall perform their duties in their prescribed law enforcement uniform or such uniform as approved by the Commissioner. Nothing in this act effects an officer's salary, overtime rights, benefits, seniority, retirement, union rights, grievance rights, or other employment protections. Officers assigned under this act retain their existing salary, rank, benefits, retirement status, and employment rights. The following personnel are exempt from the provisions of this act:

(1) officers and personnel of the Bureau of Corrections;

(2) marshals of the Supreme and Superior Courts of the Virgin Islands; and

(3) any officer specifically exempted by the Governor upon a written finding that the exemption is necessary to preserve essential governmental operations.

(c) The Commissioner shall maximize the deployment of sworn personnel to patrol, crime suppression, traffic enforcement, robbery suppression, firearm interdiction, community policing, and related public safety functions. The Commissioner of the Virgin Islands Police Department shall assign integrated personnel to the Chief of Police for the St. Croix district and the Chief of Police for the St. Thomas-St. John district, respectively. District Police Chiefs shall exercise operational supervision over all personnel. Not later than 15 days of enactment date of this act, the Commissioner shall review all sworn personnel assigned throughout the

Virgin Islands Police Department. All available sworn personnel must be reassigned to operational field duties, except for the following:

- (1) Internal Affairs personnel;
- (2) personnel assigned to federally mandated functions; and
- (3) personnel assigned to critical operational functions determined by the Commissioner to be necessary for continuity of operations.

(d) Not later than 15 days after the enactment of this act, each District Police Chief shall prepare and submit a deployment plan to the Commissioner. The Commissioner shall approve, modify, or reject any deployment plan. Each deployment plan must include strategies for:

- (1) enhanced patrol operations;
 - (2) crime suppression initiatives;
 - (3) traffic enforcement operations;
 - (4) community policing efforts;
 - (5) robbery and carjacking reduction strategies;
 - (6) firearm interdiction initiatives;
 - (7) directed patrols in high-crime areas;
 - (8) staffing plans for eastern and western operational zones within each district;
- and
- (9) strategies designed to maximize police visibility and rapid response capabilities.

(e) The Commissioner shall submit monthly reports to the Governor and the Legislature of the Virgin Islands detailing:

- (1) personnel assignments;
- (2) deployment activities;
- (3) arrest and traffic citation statistics, inclusive of health, fire, and licensing citations;
- (4) firearm recoveries;
- (5) robbery and carjacking statistics;
- (6) homicide statistics;
- (7) overtime expenditures;
- (8) crime trend analysis; and
- (9) recommendations for continuation or modification of the initiative.

(f)(1) Not later than 90 days after implementation of this initiative, the Commissioner shall submit a comprehensive assessment of the initiative to the Governor and Legislature. The assessment must address:

- (A) crime reduction outcomes;
 - (B) operational effectiveness;
 - (C) personnel utilization;
 - (D) community impact; and
 - (E) recommendations regarding continuation or termination.
- (2) Following the initial 90-day assessment, the Governor may:
- (A) terminate the initiative and return all personnel to their originating agencies;
- or
- (B) extend the initiative for not more than an additional 90 days.

(g) Unless otherwise authorized by law, this initiative terminates 180 days after its enactment. Upon expiration or termination of this act, all personnel assigned under this act shall immediately return to their originating agencies and resume their regular duties and responsibilities.

BILL SUMMARY

This bill establishes a temporary territory-wide law enforcement integration initiative to address rising violent crime, homicides, armed robberies, and carjackings in the Virgin Islands. The measure temporarily reassigns available law enforcement officers from territorial agencies to the operational command of the Virgin Islands Police Department for not less than 90 days and may be extended for an additional 90 days. Unless otherwise authorized by law, this initiative may not be effective for more than 180 days. The bill requires the reassignment of available sworn VIPD personnel to field operations, mandates district deployment plans, increases police visibility through uniformed patrols, and requires monthly reporting and a formal 90-day assessment. Upon completion of the initiative, all officers return to their respective agencies.

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