

## **LAWMAKER UPDATED ON THE DEPARTMENT OF V.I. POLICE DEPARTMENT AND OTHER AGENCIES POST-HURRICANE IRMA AND HURRICANE MARIA**

**Date :** November 3, 2017

St. Thomas – The Committee of Homeland Security, Justice and Public Safety chaired by Sen. Brian Smith, held a meeting at the Capitol Building on Friday, to receive testimony from the V.I. Police Department and other agencies on the status post-Hurricane Irma and Hurricane Maria.

The post-hurricane update for the VIPD included severe damaged sustained to the infrastructure of the department. Currently, there are several inhabitable operational centers, the some of the vehicular fleet both marked and unmarked are deemed inoperable, and there are diminished resources. Restoration efforts include consolidating remaining operation centers, and policeman are working lengthy work days and despite damage sustained to the vehicles, they are still in use stated Delroy Richards, Commissioner of the VIPD.

“Policeman are working 12-hour days, are they being paid for overtime hours?” asked Sen. Smith. Commissioner Richards said, “Overtime should be paid based on the Collective Bargaining Agreement. My office has been working relentlessly to ensure overtime payment. In collaboration with my chief financial officer, I have certified a batch of overtime documents and personally delivered it to the Department of Finance.”

“Can you expound on the criminal element post-hurricane?” inquired Sen. Smith. Commissioner Richards stated that despite the state of the territory, the criminal enterprise continued. The data provided after the hurricanes indicated that there was an increase in burglaries of homes and businesses, larcenies and physical assault.

In a series of questions, Sen. Smith inquired about homicides in the territory and outside law enforcement personnel. Commissioner Richards stated that there were 50 homicides before the hurricanes. Since then, five more murders were committed. There are thirty-one New York State Troopers who were assigned to assist police officers on St. John.

Lawmakers also inquired about services to assist first-responders' post-hurricane. "What did VIPD do to help officers after the storms," asked Nereida Rivera O'Reilly. Commissioner Richards stated that VIPD provided catered food twice a day for officers, VIPD paid for hotel arrangements for some of them, Emergency Operation Center for disaster recovery was available, and FEMA distributed supplies to all first responders.

Sen. Jean Forde inquired about psychological services offered to police officers. Curtis Griffin, Assistant Police Commissioner of VIPD, stated that officers were sent to St. Croix to speak with the in-house psychologist and additional services were provided by federal agencies.

Separately, the Bureau of Information & Technology (BIT), V.I. Department of Justice and the Bureau of Motor Vehicles also shared an update post-hurricane.

Angelo Riddick, Director/Chief Information Center of BIT stated that as a result of the damages to BIT facilities the temporary estimate to restore services is approximately \$893,000. The monies will cover a digital signature application, Land Mobile Radio that allows for connectivity and continuation of operations, digital camera close circuit television, additional network system administrators, an enterprise architect and more space in the Microsoft Cloud Azure application to store data.

Claude Walker, Attorney General, shared the update for the Department of Justice. Post-Hurricanes, the department is investigating charitable donations to ensure the legitimacy of the donors. He also addressed the increase of the domestic violence stating that the Division of Mental Health Hotline is available to deal with psychological stress. The department continued to disburse child support checks that is deposited directly into the bank accounts of the parent.

Committee Members present are senators Brian Smith, Jean Forde, Novelle Francis, Dwayne DeGraff and Nereida Rivera O'Reilly.

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