

**THIRTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE OF THE VIRGIN
ISLANDS
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY, JUSTICE, AND
PUBLIC SAFETY
Chairperson Kenneth L. Gittens
Thursday, April 4th, 2024**

Good morning Honorable Kenneth L. Gittens, Chairperson of the Committee on Homeland Security, Justice and Public Safety, Committee Members, members of the 35th Legislature, legislative staff, members of the Virgin Islands Police Department, and to the listening and viewing audience. I am Mario M. Brooks, Assistant Police Commissioner, here this morning to provide an overview of the department's preparations for the upcoming Virgin Islands Carnival here on the island of St Thomas. Our preparations underscore our shared commitment to ensuring the safety and security of our community during this significant event.

The St. Thomas Carnival, a jewel in the crown of the United States Virgin Islands, is more than just a celebration; it is a vibrant expression of our rich cultural heritage and a significant contributor to our local economy, attracting tourists from around the world. The Carnival's history is deeply interwoven with the story of our islands, showcasing our unique traditions and the spirit of our people. We are also honored once again to host this prestigious event here at the Capital of these beautiful Virgin Islands, an event that not only elevates these islands but also highlights our capacity to manage high-profile events with utmost efficiency and top-notch security.

While the safety of our fellow community members and that of all our guests is a partnered effort involving our federal and local counterparts, the VIPD plays a pivotal role in ensuring that every citizen and visitor enjoys a safe and protected

celebratory environment. It is imperative to note that the specifics of our operational plans are sensitive and must remain confidential to ensure their effectiveness. However, I can assure this committee that our strategies are comprehensive, innovative, and tailored to address the unique challenges of such a large-scale and high-profile event.

At the forefront of our operational plan is the deployment of our centralized real-time information center, a state-of-the-art hub that connects, and serves as our onsite communications and monitoring hub. This advanced setup allows for instantaneous response and access to real-time surveillance of the Carnival Village and immediate areas, dispatch capabilities, and comprehensive communication channels. For the duration of the Carnival events, we will be deploying temporary cameras, utilizing our drone resources, mobile surveillance camera systems and various forms of digital equipment, enhancing our surveillance capabilities, and ensuring a wide coverage of the downtown Charlotte Amalie area as well as the surrounding communities with foot patrols. The synergy between the real-time information center and the off-site camera center is crucial, as they operate both independently and in tandem, providing redundant systems that ensure uninterrupted monitoring and rapid response to any situation.

Reflecting on last year's events, our proactive approach and technological advancements led to several significant successes. Notable among these were the arrests of individuals in possession of illegal firearms. These interventions, made possible by our vigilant officers and advanced surveillance, prevented potential escalations, and maintained the overall peace of the festival. Our strategy of blending boots on the ground with digital surveillance has proven to be effective, enabling us to intervene promptly in altercations and maintain a safe environment for all attendees.

The success of our operations hinges on the unwavering dedication and expertise of our VIPD officers. Their commitment to public safety, especially during such large-scale events, is highly commendable. Our officers undergo diverse

types of recurrent training, ensuring they are well-equipped to manage the complexities and challenges of event security. The diligence and professionalism displayed by our team are a testament to their commitment to safeguarding our community and upholding the law. As we prepare for this year's Carnival, we have the utmost confidence in the abilities of our Officers to effectively execute our plans thereby increasing overall efficiency that will ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for everyone involved.

Looking ahead, the Virgin Islands Police Department remains dedicated to continuous improvement and innovation in our security strategies. We are committed to exploring and implementing modern technologies and methodologies that enhance our capabilities to further public safety. This commitment extends beyond the Carnival, celebrations, and festivals, as we strive to maintain a high standard of security and peace in our community throughout the year. We pledge to continue engaging with our community, stakeholders, and federal partners to foster a collaborative approach towards a safer and more secure environment for all. I wish to reaffirm the Virgin Islands Police Department's unwavering commitment to the safety and well-being of our community. These events are not merely celebrations; they serve as a testament to our resilience, unity, and cultural pride. As we engage in the various Carnival activities, let us do so with mindfulness and responsibility. Let us watch out for one another and promptly report any suspicious activity to law enforcement. By being each other's guardians, we can foster an environment of trust and security. By adhering to these precautions, we can ensure that the Virgin Islands Carnival, the Crucian Festival, and the St. John 4th of July Celebration remain cherished traditions for generations to come.

Before concluding, I must express my heartfelt thanks and appreciation to the police officers and supervisors of the VIPD for their dedication and steadfast commitment to policing our community throughout the year. Through your efforts, everyone can enjoy safe and joyous occasions, thank you. The team and I are now available to address any questions that you may have.