GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

STATEMENT

Tel: (284)468-2730
Official Government Website:
https://gov.vg

Statement by Governor Daniel Pruce: Press Conference 23rd February, 2026

Release Date: 12 March, 2026



Good afternoon everybody, it’s good to see colleagues here in the room and good afternoon everyone who is joining us online. I wanted to take this opportunity update everyone on security matters, including the Royal Virgin Islands Police Force and the prison, HMP Balsam Ghut. As Mr Adams said, as usual, after my opening remarks I’m very happy to take questions.

Let me begin by looking back to the Anti-Crime Summit in September last year. At that Summit, many participants - including myself - made a number of commitments to tackle crime within the Territory. I made a number of commitments specifically focused on security as that fits within my responsibilities and I just wanted to take a little time today to update on the progress in relation to those.

One of the things I undertook to take forward was the establishment of a Senior Strategic Security Advisor to work within my office. I’m pleased to say that that person I’m confident will join us by the middle of the year. Having someone in this role will help deliver my other commitment - creating a comprehensive National Security Strategy. The person in that position will also provide senior-level expertise to support the broad range of work that is already underway.

I also made a commitment concerning radio and we have launched a project to improve radio communications within the Royal Virgin Islands Police Force. A Project Manager, paid funded by the United Kingdom and deployed here last year. That person continues to drive this work forwards. Reliable, modern communications are crucial for officer safety, for rapid response and for delivering coordinated operations, and I’m confident and optimistic that we will have that radio communications project in place in the year ahead.

I also undertook to improve the radar capability that we have and I am pleased that we are now working towards the installation of a maritime radar system to strengthen border security and improve our surveillance capacity. The United Kingdom will fully fund this installation, which is being led by the United Kingdom’s Joint Maritime Security Centre. A scoping visit has already taken place, and development will continue over the coming months. I hope to have that radar system in place within a year.

Meanwhile, as I undertook at the Summit last year, I will continue working with the Premier and all relevant partners to ensure that the wider law enforcement sector—including the police, the prison and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions—has the resources it needs to keep our Territory safe. A very emphatic manifestation of this is the recent agreement on funding for the security sector for 2026 as reflected in the 2026 Budget. The Premier made a commitment to the UK's Minister for the Overseas Territories, Stephen Doughty, to increase funding across law enforcement agencies for 2026 and I'm very pleased that the budget settlement for 2026 reflects that. Some examples are for the Royal Virgin Islands Police Force - $6.7 million, for HMP Balsam Ghut $2.3 million and just over $800,000 for the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. These funding allocations will help us address what has been an historic period of under-funding of the crucial agencies that are here to keep us all safe and secure.

I'd like to pay tribute to the work of the Premier and Ministry of Finance for the collaborative spirit in which we've taken this work on funding forwards and I look forward to working together to ensure delivery.

Within this work we will also have a particular focus on filling staffing gaps. That work is very much under way and I'm grateful to the Office of the Deputy Governor and to colleagues in Human Resources for the effort and energy that they've brought to that important and painstaking work. All of us can take this work together forwards in partnership, and by doing so we can make this Territory a safer place.

Let me turn now to the Royal Virgin Islands Police Force and as ever, I remain committed to realising the vision I spelt out at the Summit of achieving a a highly professional and properly resourced RVIPF which enjoys the trust and confidence of the public. That will be a force equipped with the tools, training and support it needs.

The funding settlement for the police is already helping to support the radio communications I mentioned, and the rollout of new police vehicles which will help boost patrols, visibility and responsiveness. I'm hopefully that the budget allocation for next year will support our planning to rebuild the Road Town Police Station and

to upgrade police facilities in line with modern safety standards.

The force is currently conducting a comprehensive Threat, Risk, and Demand vs. Resources assessment and this will ensure that officers are deployed where they are needed most. It will strengthen its ability to allocate resources effectively and to enhance police presence in higher-risk areas. I know that the force remains committed to improving the investigation and management of domestic abuse, sexual offences and safeguarding matters, all of which remain high priority areas. The RVIPF is also putting in place an improved approach to manage internal issues and organisational functions, strengthening professional processes across the force. As this work continues to strengthen capabilities in the force, since December a crime analyst has been deployed to assist with intelligence and investigation support. UK funding and expertise is also developing and delivering a wide range of programmes focused on officers. Some examples of that are the confidential reporting service for officers known as the Say So service. A welfare programme known as the Oscar Kilo programme. Support for the Acting Commissioner to develop a Strategic Threat and Risk Assessment. And a broad range of specialist training for various officers on Marine Security, Investigations, Strategic leadership, Operations Awareness, tackling financial crimes and managing sexual and violent offenders.

My own Office, with funding from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, is also supporting frontline welfare by delivering Trauma Risk Management expertise for police, prison officers, and VISAR search and rescue volunteers, ensuring first responders are better equipped to handle the psychological impact of being on the frontline of traumatic incidents.

The UK Home Office is also assisting with the implementation of recommendations from last year’s Law Enforcement Review, including improvements to custody practices and investigative standards.

In all of this, the vision is clear and the goal is clear: we want to achieve stronger investigations, we want to achieve higher quality case management and we want to achieve improved support for victims.

As I've said previously, security is rooted in community, and the public is an invaluable source of insight for law enforcement partners such as the National Security Council, which I chair. In the spirit of the Anti-Crime Summit last September, one of the commitments I made was to establish a way that we could have more engagement with the community – I described it as a Community Advisory Group at the time – but I wanted to find a way that the dialogue that was so successful at the Summit was sustained and that the conversations that were enormously valuable continued as we go throughout this year. Reflecting further on that aspiration, what I'm aiming to take forward is a flexible, community-driven that will enable broad public feedback on security matters and doing so in a variety of ways: face to face conversations, or, online – whatever route works for people. An approach like this will achieve that objective of cementing that community conversation into the way we manage our law enforcement space. Maximising engagement and widening participation can help ensure that a diverse range of voices can help inform the discussion we are having in government about national security. I will develop this idea further and discuss it with the NSC and take it forward, but I would hope that by the middle of the year we will have something in place and get that process underway.

Meanwhile, the process to appoint a permanent Commissioner of Police continues. As colleagues will recall the Police Service Commission have concluded their part of the recruitment process and submitted a recommendation at the end of last year. That recommendation has been considered within the NSC and I am in contact with the Police Service Commission on that matter. Those contacts will continue for a period. And I should pay tribute to the work of the Police Service Commission who have the responsibility of working with myself and the NSC to ensure that the process to recruit into this very important position is a successful one and it's conducted diligently and effectively. I've been grateful for the continuing discussions that they have had with me and look forward to them continuing. But as time is passing I am mindful that we need to ensure stability of leadership in the police force and in the interests of maintaining that stability I am very pleased that Acting Commissioner Ullger has agreed to remain in his position for a little longer. I would anticipate that would be until around the middle of this year and as I said that would also allow us the time to proceed with the recruitment process for the

new permanent commissioner.

Let me move on to the prison. With the prison, we are continuing to advance our planning to improve the estate. This includes essential fire safety work, roof repairs and a thorough electrical inspection, alongside a behaviour management incentive scheme. But the fundamental longstanding issues remain. HMP Balsam Ghut has capacity for 80 inmates but now holds over 130. So further long-term investment will be required to meet capacity and requirements to ensure we are providing a safe facility for those are there and also to establishing a proper facility for the juvenile inmates there. I will keep working closely with Ministers in the locally elected government including Minister Vincent Wheatley and the Superintendent to ensure these needs are met.

Colleagues will recall that following the escape from the prison in the autumn of last year I commissioned an independent review. That review was conducted by the United Kingdom's Ministry of Justice and it has been considered by the National Security Council. Minister Vincent Wheatley and myself have met with Superintendent Kendall, we've discussed the findings of that report and we are all firmly of the same view: the recommendations of that report must be implemented in full, and each of us shares responsibility for ensuring that happens. There are over 30 recommendations in the report touching on various areas – you'll understand that for reasons of sensitivity I won't go into the detail here – but it's very clear that we need to ensure that each of those recommendations is delivered, delivered fully and delivered quickly. I think ultimately, in this particular case, our leadership will be judged. It will be judged not by our intentions but by our outcomes and getting this job done properly and that's the standard we must hold ourselves to and the one we must uphold for the safety of the Territory and the integrity of our justice system.

All of that said, I did also want to add that, despite the challenges, we are seeing encouraging progress at the prison. Just a couple of weeks ago, I visited the facility alongside the Premier and Minister Vincent Wheatley to attend a performance by inmates participating in an innovative rehabilitation programme based upon training that focused on dramatic skills. That initiative has helped to build essential life skills - discipline, public speaking, and teamwork - that will support a successful

transition back into the community for those when they complete their sentences at the prison.

Rehabilitation is a core part of our justice system and the arrangements we have in place at the prison say a lot about us as a community. When done well, it gives individuals the tools they need to change their lives and help support them to return to society with purpose, skills and stability. It’s been clearly demonstrated around the world that effective rehabilitation reduces the likelihood of reoffending by helping people build the confidence and capabilities needed to secure employment, maintain healthy relationships and contribute positively to our community. All of this strengthens public safety, supports families and creates a safe, more resilient Virgin Islands.

Overall, the Territory is making steady, coordinated advances across the security portfolio. Upgraded police radios and the rollout of new vehicles are strengthening responsiveness and visibility, while specialist training, leadership development and enhanced welfare programmes are building the skills and resilience of officers.

Projects to reinforce border surveillance, including the planned maritime radar system, and to improve investigative practice are contributing to a more coherent and robust security framework.

Internal reforms within the force—such as more effective resource deployment, a sharper focus on safeguarding and strengthened corporate functions—are further supporting a professional, well-structured sector.

Collectively, these efforts reflect a shared commitment to ensuring the Virgin Islands’ law enforcement agencies are well-equipped, well-supported and able to keep o Territory safe.

For Additional Information Contact:

Mr. Eusa Z. Adams
Communications Officer II

Office of the Deputy Governor
Governor's Group
Constitutionally Established Departments
Telephone: 1-284-468-2219/3000
Email: eadams@gov.vg