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Premier Wheatley Reaffirms Support for Virgin Islanders in Senior Roles

(The RVIPF Performed Well under Jacqueline Vanterpool's Leadership)

Premier and Minister of Finance, Honourable Dr. Natalio D. Wheatley, has expressed his strong support for the advancement of Virgin Islanders into top leadership positions within the public service, including the Royal Virgin Islands Police Force (RVIPF).

Speaking at a press conference on Friday, 7 November 2025, Premier Wheatley addressed the recent decision by Governor Daniel Pruce to reinstate Acting Commissioner of Police, Ms. Jacqueline Vanterpool, to her substantive post as Deputy Commissioner. The Premier said that as a member of the National Security Council and the elected leader of Government, he was duty-bound to clarify his position on the matter.

"Governor Pruce did inform me of his intentions to do so, and I told him that I did not agree for several reasons," the Premier said. "My representative on the Police Service Commission has informed me that the recommendation for a new police commissioner is imminent. If Jackie Vanterpool is indeed the successful candidate, it would be highly disruptive to bring someone from across the globe as an interim Police Commissioner only to replace them with Jackie Vanterpool as the new commissioner. This raises doubts about whether Jackie Vanterpool has a fair opportunity to win the job, despite the police services commission recommendation."

Premier Wheatley further noted that the timing of the decision was especially concerning given the current security environment. He stated: "While we remain a jurisdiction with relatively low crime, we are currently experiencing an upsurge in certain types of crime. We are also searching for two dangerous escapees. This is not the right time to disrupt the leadership of the force."

The Premier also raised concerns about the process used to appoint an interim Acting Commissioner. "I am aware of no formal application process. I am also concerned that the NSC's advice was not sought for this significant decision. The actions of the Governor may be constitutional, but they undermine public trust."

The Territory's leader commended the work of Ms. Vanterpool during her tenure as Acting Commissioner, describing her performance as effective and impactful. "I want to affirm that, in my estimation, the police force has performed well under the leadership of Jackie Vanterpool. I believe that the public also recognised the results Jackie Vanterpool was getting in the top position," he said.

Premier Wheatley went on to express concern over the recurring pattern of short-term overseas appointments to the role of Commissioner over the past decades. ". Besides Vernon Malone and Reynell Frazer, we have had several UK nationals in the last 20-30 years who have served as police commissioners, including Barry Webb, David Morris, Michael Matthews, and Mark Collins, all of whom are white males. These individuals must come and familiarise themselves with

the Territory and form strong working relationships with senior leadership. By the time they become familiar, it is time for them to leave. Then the cycle repeats itself, unfortunately.”

The Premier reiterated his preference for capacity building and succession planning within the Territory. “We must create training opportunities and upward mobility for talented members of the force. We must also send a message to the public, including our Virgin Islands daughters, that there is no glass ceiling for you. If you work hard and do the right thing, you have the opportunity to rise to the highest offices of our society.”

Premier Wheatley concluded by linking this issue to the broader question of internal self-governance. “This situation highlights the importance of constitutional responsibility for internal security being transferred to the elected government, where we will have greater accountability to the public for the decisions that we make on the public’s behalf.”

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About:

The Government of the Virgin Islands is committed to promoting good governance and the sustainable development of the Territory with a view to ensuring a well-informed, prosperous, cohesive and stable society. The Premier’s Office serves as the focal point for coordinating cross-sectoral policies and programmes and promoting the sustainable development of the Virgin Islands to ensure a well-informed, prosperous, cohesive and stable society.