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USVI to Become Global 'Force Projection' for U.S. Army as National Guard Announces \$39 Million State-of-the-Art Facilities on St. Croix

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An Army National Guard Readiness Center and Army Aviation Support Facility in Kankakee, Ill.

In a significant stride towards bolstering defense capabilities, Maj. Gen. Kodjo Knox-Limbacker of the Virgin Islands National Guard has revealed to the Consortium plans for the construction of new, state-of-the-art facilities.

The purpose of these projects is to ensure that soldiers, airmen, and Department of Defense civilians are equipped with the highest standards of efficiency.

"The Virgin Islands National Guard's unique capabilities place us in a prime position to respond to civil support efforts across our four non-contiguous islands," Knox-Limbacker stated. "Our force must be professionally trained with modern equipment and facilities to maintain its readiness and responsiveness."

Two key projects highlighted are the new Army Aviation Support Facility (AASF) and the Weapons of Mass Destruction-Civil Support Team (WMD-CST) ready building. The objective of these projects is to exceed the standards for federal and state missions. Knox-Limbacker emphasized the commitment to rehabilitate and upgrade existing facilities where possible, and construct new facilities to accommodate new formations and equipment fielded to the Virgin Islands Army and Air National Guard.

In collaboration with the V.I. Port Authority and the Federal Aviation Agency, a 25-acre land lease has been secured on the north side of Henry E. Rohlsen Airport on St. Croix for the construction of the AASF and WMD-CST facilities. The AASF will span approximately 30,000 square feet, and the WMD-CST facility will occupy around 17,000 square feet. These projects, worth up to \$39 million, are entirely federally funded under the Fiscal Year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act, Knox-Limbacker made known.

Upon completion of these projects in 2025 and after the necessary aviation operational assessments, the 1-114th Aviation Detachment – currently stationed in Michigan with two Lakota UH-72 Helicopters and associated personnel – will return to the territory. "The return of the Virgin Islands Army National Guard Aviation operations to St. Croix positions the Virgin Islands as a strategic force projection platform for global military operations transiting our region," added Knox-Limbacker.

VIPA Executive Director, Carlton Dowe, gave a brief mention of the project during a Public-Private Partnership (P3) meeting held at Henry E. Rohlsen Airport Tuesday night. Dowe highlighted the project as part of VIPA's ongoing efforts to further develop its properties, contributing to the overall economic stability of the U.S. Virgin Islands.