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# Airlines Registering Strong Demand for the U.S. Virgin Islands, Tourism Commissioner Says

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**Dept. of Tourism Commissioner, Joseph Boschulte** By. USVI DEPT. OF TOURISM

Travel demand for the U.S. Virgin Islands is strong and forecasts look positive, reports Dept. of Tourism Commissioner Joseph Boschulte after completing meetings at Routes Americas, a leading aviation event, on the U.S. mainland last week.

Mr. Boschulte, who held bilateral conversations with about a dozen airline executives while in Indianapolis, reported that carriers were upbeat about business to the territory as he delivered important destination updates to help guide their decisions for the next winter season.

"Load factors this winter are strong," said the commissioner, who noted that one airline reported completely full loads into the territory over the past several weeks.

The tourism chief explained that there was particularly strong interest in St. Croix, and he took the opportunity to update partners on the marketing initiatives which leverage the island's new brand "St. Croix: a vibe like no other".

"We have partners that are familiar with all three islands and we have some partners that we've met with that are only familiar with St. Thomas, which is part of the reason why we developed the campaign - because we need people to recognize St. Croix as its own destination," he said.

"So it gives us an opportunity to hopefully improve our airlift into St. Croix for the upcoming winter season when we have two major hotels back online with a renewed product - Renaissance St. Croix Carambola Beach Resort & Spa, and Divi Carina Bay Resort & Casino," he added.

Commissioner Boschulte, who also met with Indianapolis-based travel agents and journalists during his visit, noted: "What we do now are the building blocks ... we don't expect to see eight American Airlines jets on St. Croix next winter, but in three years we'd like to see eight AA jets on a Saturday on the island."

Routes Americas, now in its 13th year, is an opportunity for airlines, airports and destinations to come together to discuss new air service agreements.

Dave Appleby, Director - Latin America & the Caribbean for Routes, said that it was absolutely critical for islands such as the U.S. Virgin Islands "to be present, to be able to make those connections, and to be able to really strengthen their case as to why those airlines should be considering them in the future."