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Bryan Commutes Sentences for Murder and Assault, Proposes Ending Mandatory Minimums

Governor Bryan commutes sentences for individuals convicted of serious offenses and proposes legislation to abolish mandatory minimum sentences

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The John A. Bell Correctional Facility on St. Croix. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM

In a significant move towards justice reform, Governor Albert Bryan Jr. has commuted the sentences of three individuals convicted of serious crimes, including first-degree murder and assault, as part of his broader strategy to overhaul the criminal justice system.

During Monday's weekly briefing, it was also announced that new legislation aimed at eliminating mandatory minimum sentences for certain crimes has been proposed.

Alexander Viust, 51, has been released after serving 28 years for first-degree murder and assault. Denise Donovan, 64, has been commuted after 20 years in prison for first-degree murder, and Michael K. Davis, 50, has been released after 8 years, convicted of third-degree assault and unauthorized firearm use.

In addition, two pardons were granted; Latoya Nicole Smith, 27, for third-degree assault, and Kevin Allong, 53, for being an accessory after the fact to murder.

The proposed legislation seeks to remove mandatory minimum sentences, allowing judges greater flexibility to tailor sentences based on the specifics of each case. This initiative is intended to create a more equitable justice system, focusing on fairness and rehabilitation over punishment.

Further updates from the Government House include the nomination of Magistrate Ernest E. Morris to the VI Superior Court, reflecting the administration's confidence in his ability to bolster the judiciary with integrity and wisdom.

In health and safety preparations, the Department of Health's ongoing Health and Wellness Fair, which concludes on June 9, is providing free medical services to residents with the support of nearly 300 military medical professionals. This effort is part of the larger Healthier Horizon initiative aimed at reducing health disparities across the territory.

Additionally, in anticipation of hurricane season, the government has conducted readiness exercises in collaboration with federal partners to enhance response strategies for potential hurricanes.