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Both O'Neal and Martinez Now Asked to Resign Amid Federal Probe; Press Conference Set For Monday

Federal / **Published On June 16, 2024 03:35 PM /**

Ernice Gilbert **June 16, 2024**

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Governor Albert Bryan and Jenifer O'Neal at the USVI's Revenue Generating Conference
By. GOV'T HOUSE

Last updated at 8:01 p.m. Sunday, June 16, 2024

Governor Albert Bryan has now called for the resignation of Police Commissioner Ray Martinez and Office of Management and Budget Director Jenifer O'Neal, the Consortium can confirm. Previously, we reported that Mr. Bryan had not yet made a decision on Ms. O'Neal's fate, and one of the considerations was administrative leave while the matter unfolds.

The actions follow Consortium reporting that brought to the fore a federal criminal investigation involving Mr. Martinez's alleged contractual misconduct and improper financial transactions.

Governor Bryan and the V.I. Attorney General nominee Gordon Rhea will address this matter at a press conference to be held Monday at Gov't House in St. Thomas at 10:00 a.m.

The Consortium has learned that Mario Brooks is serving as Acting VIPD Commissioner and will be speaking at the June 16-20 National Alliance of State Drug Enforcement Agencies (NASDEA) Symposium being held in St. Thomas, the symposium's first event in the territory.

"The administration has been informed that Ray Martinez, the Commissioner of the Virgin Islands Police Department, is implicated in an ongoing federal investigation," said Gov't House in a statement provided to the Consortium. "Adhering to our zero-tolerance policy against corruption, the Governor has accepted Mr. Martinez's resignation to ensure the integrity of our law enforcement efforts. We will fully cooperate with the federal investigation and are committed to maintaining the highest standards of transparency and accountability within the Virgin Islands Government."



Former VIPD Commissioner Ray Martinez (Credit: V.I. LEGISLATURE)

The Federal Bureau of Investigation earlier this week delivered a target letter to Mr. Martinez and confiscated the cellphones of Mr. Martinez and his wife. A target letter from the FBI is a formal notification issued by the U.S. Department of Justice, typically through a federal prosecutor, indicating that the recipient is under investigation in connection with a federal crime.

A grand jury is scheduled for June 24th, the Consortium has learned, at which Commissioner Martinez will be present with his legal team to defend against the federal charges.

The matter is related to a St. Thomas-based firm that was contracted by the V.I. Police Department. After receiving the contract from the VIPD, signed by the police commissioner, the firm provided Mr. Martinez with funds to complete work on a restaurant project he has been working on for quite some time, according to people with intimate knowledge of the matter.

The commissioner, speaking to the Consortium Saturday afternoon, confirmed that he was indeed served a target letter by the FBI. He declined to comment further.

Ms. O'Neal was served a search warrant and subpoena by federal agents earlier this week while in Florida, in a matter that is tied to the FBI's criminal investigation of Mr. Martinez, according to people with knowledge of the matter.

Ms. O'Neal was subpoenaed to appear before a grand jury in the U.S. Virgin Islands to give testimony later this month, or provide documents in lieu of testimony, in the matter involving Mr. Martinez, said the people, who spoke on the condition of anonymity. The federal agents also seized her cellphone. Investigators typically need a search warrant to seize a phone, which requires showing probable cause that the phone contains evidence of a crime. The warrant must be approved by a judge.

The subpoena and search warrants were served while Ms. O'Neal was at a hotel in Orlando, Florida.

This event marks the third official from the Bryan administration to come under federal scrutiny in just three days. On Thursday, V.I. Department of Education Director of Maintenance Davidson Charlemagne and former V.I. Housing Finance Authority Chief Operating Officer Darin Richardson — two high-ranking government officials — were arrested after a federal grand jury returned an indictment charging them with government program fraud, wire fraud, and money laundering conspiracy. Mr. Charlemagne's wife, Sasha, was also arrested and charged in the alleged scheme.

This is a developing story; check back for updates.

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