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Unsealed Documents Reveal Mon Ethos Planted Eavesdropping Devices in Gov't Offices

Federal investigation uncovers Mon Ethos's role in planting surveillance devices across government offices, leading to over \$66K in bribes paid to VIPD official in exchange for lucrative contracts and invoice approvals

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The Office of Management and Budget Office in St. Thomas was at the center of the eavesdropping scandal. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

It was one of the most perplexing incidents to impact the USVI government: over a dozen eavesdropping devices planted throughout various government departments and agencies for reasons unknown. "I could never understand why anybody would bug the OMB office," Governor

Albert Bryan said on June 17, days after the Consortium published multiple reports of federal investigations involving some of his top department and agency heads: former VIPD commissioner [Ray Martinez](#), former Office of Management and Budget Director [Jennifer O'Neal](#), and current Sports, Parks and Recreation Commissioner [Calvert White](#).

The [eavesdropping matter](#), which the Consortium first reported on in August 2022, brought together local and federal authorities for an investigation, Mr. Martinez said at the time. He condemned the incident and said law enforcement would utilize all their resources to bring the perpetrators to justice. "The individuals who placed these devices for nefarious reasons underestimated local law enforcement's ability to discover them," he said at the time. "We will not idly stand by and allow these individuals to trample our civil rights and intentionally interfere with the effective and orderly operation of our government. They underestimated our dedication and access to advanced digital forensic capabilities. Make no mistake we have only just scratched the surface of this investigation."

As it happens, the devices were planted by Mon Ethos, whose founder David Whitaker [has since pleaded guilty](#) to wire fraud and bribery.

During [the June 17 press conference](#), Governor Bryan said the relationship with Mon Ethos started after the eavesdropping devices were discovered. "That's how this relationship with them started," he said, a fact that was confirmed by the unsealed federal document on Thursday. "This engagement led to the discovery of a miniature spy camera in the office of the Commissioner of the Virgin Islands Department of Personnel," the document reads. A subsequent investigation resulted in the discovery of 13 more surveillance devices hidden in various government offices. Mr. Whitaker then proceeded to bill the VIPD a total of \$130,195 for the "work" done in finding these devices. It appears that it was at this point that the nefarious dealings with the VIPD official began.

Prosecutors detailed, with names redacted from the public version of the document, the bribes paid to the VIPD 'agent' in exchange for priority payment of outstanding invoices and additional contracts awarded to Mr. Whitaker. "Specifically, at the outset of the scheme, Defendant discussed and agreed with [redacted] that if Defendant paid [redacted] and provided financial assistance to a restaurant owned by [redacted], [redacted] would use his position as the [redacted] to make sure that Defendant's outstanding invoices would be paid by approving and signing the final invoices and instructing others to sign off on the final invoices," the document reads. In total, the unnamed VIPD official received over \$66,000 worth of bribes, which included restaurant supplies and equipment, trips from St. Thomas to Boston for the unnamed individual and other people, and cash payments to the official and his family. "The expenses associated with the Boston trips included, but were not limited to, staying at the Encore Hotel, personal butler service throughout the stay, and tickets to local sporting events," the document says.