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BVI Seeks Talks with USVI as Governor Bryan Considers 25% Tariff on Imports

BVI officials have initiated discussions with their USVI counterparts after Governor Bryan announced potential retaliatory tariffs. The proposed measures come in response to BVI legislation that would significantly raise fees on USVI charter businesses.

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Seaport operations at the Crown Bay Cargo Port in St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

Officials of the British Virgin Islands have made overtures to their counterparts in the USVI, following the announcement by Governor Albert Bryan Jr. that he is [considering steep retaliatory tariffs](#) on BVI imports, of up to 25%.

“Constructive dialogue has commenced with the Bryan Administration regarding this important issue for all stakeholders concerned,” said Kye Rhymer, acting Premier of the British Virgin Islands. “We reaffirm our government’s commitment to maintaining the strong familial and economic ties that bind the VI and USVI. These ties are rooted in mutual respect, shared history, and a spirit of collaboration.”

However, that collaborative spirit, local charter businesses say, is not evident in pending legislation in the BVI that would impose massive fee hikes on their operations. The increases, up to 60 times the current rates, threaten the ongoing viability of charter companies, representatives say – a hostile policy move that USVI charter sailing operators say [must be reciprocated by local authorities](#).

Even the Marine Association of the BVI, which the proposed protectionst legislation would ostensibly benefit, has come out against the amendments. The association says the fee hikes would damage the BVI economy and the USVI's marine operators while doing little to strengthen the industry in the BVI.

A meeting between Governor Bryan and the Legislature is scheduled for this Wednesday to discuss the proposed tariffs, as well as entry and exit fees for visitors coming to the USVI from the BVI.

Now facing the prospect of increased costs for BVI travellers and businesses, officials in the territory are reaching out to their American neighbors. “We are dedicated to addressing this matter through open communication and good governance,” Mr. Rhymer said.