

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Governor Bryan, Premier Wheatley Set for High-Stakes Talks on Yacht Fee Increases Friday

Governor Albert Bryan and BVI Premier Natalio Wheatley will meet Friday to discuss proposed fee increases on USVI-based charter yachts. Bryan aims for an equitable resolution but has warned that if necessary, he may seek White House support for tariffs.

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A high-level meeting between the leaders of the neighboring Virgin Islands territories is set for this Friday, Governor Albert Bryan Jr. announced on Monday.

The USVI governor and his counterpart in the British Virgin Islands, Premier Natalio Wheatley, will have “an open and candid conversation about proposed increases on U.S.

Virgin Islands-based charter yacht operations in the BVI,” Governor Bryan said. At the end of the discussion, the governor hopes to reach “an equitable resolution that builds our charter yacht industry, promotes this friendship, and creates economic wins for both territories.”

Governor Bryan declared that his intent in the burgeoning trade dispute “has always been to find an amicable solution,” his expressed threat to impose steep retaliatory tariffs on BVI goods notwithstanding. “I do not engage in diplomacy through headlines, but we have had this conversation over and over again with the BVI,” he complained. “Up to last year we met, we decided things would change. A year has gone by, no change.”

The governor says he is understanding of the neighboring territory's desire to build its marine industry. “However, when those efforts come at the detriment of the United States Virgin Islands industry, we must address them with respect, sensitivity, and above all, substance.”

“That is not how families treat each other,” Governor Bryan said of the BVI's abrupt decision to push through massive fee hikes for foreign charter operators.

Governor Bryan has said that if necessary, he would seek support from President Trump to implement the proposed tariffs. “We are moving forward with our own strategy, and if we need help from the White House, I'll get it from there too,” Bryan told the Consortium during an interview last week. “I don't think it will come to that, but I have shared my position with the Deputy Chief of Staff at the White House. He told me, ‘If you need my help, just let me know.’”