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USVI Marine Charter Operators Should Expect Higher BVI Fees, Roach Says

Lt. Gov. Roach confirmed that marine charters traveling to the BVI will face increased fees, though not as steep as first proposed. USVI officials are gathering data ahead of a second meeting in April to reach a final agreement on the revised costs.

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Road Town Tortola, British Virgin Islands. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

Marine charter companies in the USVI should prepare to pay more to take passengers to the BVI, said Lieutenant Governor Tregenza Roach during Tuesday's press briefing from Government House. However, he believes the fees will be more reasonable than what was being initially proposed by BVI authorities.

In February, the local charter industry was thrown into uproar when news broke that the British Virgin Islands was proposing staggering increases on annual fees for overnight and day sail operators coming into the British territory. [Following threats of economic retaliation](#) from Governor Albert Bryan Jr., leaders from both territories met in [early March to discuss the issue](#). A decision was taken to place the pending legislation in the BVI House of Assembly on hold until a mutually acceptable solution was reached.

“When you sit at the negotiating table you have to be alert to what is important to the persons sitting across from you,” the lieutenant governor remarked, contrasting the circumstances of the American and British territories.

“One big difference is that they have a lot of control over who comes into their territory,” Lt. Gov Roach noted. “Another fundamental difference is that they are largely self-sufficient,” he said, explaining that unlike the significant federal support received by the USVI, British territories do not get large cash transfers from the United Kingdom. “The British experience with colonialism has not been one where they send you lots of money...the kind of relief that we get through something like the Federal Emergency Management Authority etc, they don't have that. When they have a hurricane, they have to build back their place themselves,” the lieutenant governor continued, explaining why sufficient revenue collections is of vital importance to the BVI.

During the recent high-level meeting between the two administrations, Mr. Roach said that “we've brought them to a place of movement,” implying that any eventual fee increases for day and overnight charter operators would not be as steep as originally planned. “Everybody was in a spirit of compromise,” said Lt. Gov Roach. Currently, USVI authorities are conducting a data collection exercise ahead of a second meeting tentatively scheduled for late April. Armed with that information, “I think by the time we go back to the table...we will be able to come to some conclusions, to come to a position that I think everyone can live with,” Mr. Roach said. He did not specify whether the territory would impose higher fees in response.