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Delia Smith Departs as U.S. Attorney for the Virgin Islands; Adam Sleeper Assumes Role in Acting Capacity

Delia L. Smith has departed from her role as U.S. Attorney for the District of the Virgin Islands. Adam F. Sleeper, previously First Assistant U.S. Attorney and Appellate Chief, now serves as Acting U.S. Attorney under the Vacancies Reform Act.

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Delia L. Smith, former U.S. Attorney for the Virgin Islands. By. USDOJ

In a terse announcement from the U.S. Attorney's Office in the District of the Virgin Islands, residents of the territory were informed that the tenure of Delia L. Smith as U.S. Attorney has come to an end.

No reason was given for Smith's abrupt departure, only confirmation that First Assistant U.S. Attorney Adam F. Sleeper has assumed the role of Acting U.S. Attorney, pursuant to the Vacancies Reform Act.

Sleeper is a longtime career prosecutor with the U.S. Attorney's Office. Prior to this appointment, he held the titles of First Assistant U.S. Attorney and Appellate Chief, playing a central role in both prosecutorial leadership and legal appeals for the district.

The office's announcement described Sleeper's background, noting that he received his undergraduate degree from Connecticut College and later earned a law degree from Cornell Law School. Before joining the Department of Justice, he served as a law clerk for Judge Curtis Gómez of the District Court of the Virgin Islands, and for Judge Joel Carson III of the United States Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit.

His legal experience also includes time as an associate at an international law firm based in Boston, Massachusetts, where he worked prior to his federal service?.

Smith's exit closes a chapter that began with her [nomination by President Joe Biden in 2021](#), following strong support from Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett, who had long advocated for a local appointee to lead the U.S. Attorney's Office. At the time, Plaskett called Smith's nomination "of critical importance to the Virgin Islands community," citing her deep local roots and professional journey—from her early days as a secretary in the U.S. Attorney's Office while studying at the University of the Virgin Islands, to serving as a law clerk to Judge Ishmael Myers, and later earning her law degree from the Thurgood Marshall School of Law at Texas Southern University.

Plaskett described Smith's background as one of "tremendous strength and integrity" and praised her for navigating education and public service as a single mother. "Her journey to this moment truly shows her tremendous strength and integrity that will serve our country and the people of the Virgin Islands well," Plaskett stated at the time of her nomination.

Smith succeeded Gretchen Shappert, who had been appointed in January 2018 by former U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions. During her tenure, Shappert oversaw a wide range of prosecutions involving drugs, gun violence, and public corruption. Prior to her Virgin Islands role, she served as U.S. Attorney for the Western District of North Carolina, and in several other federal and local legal capacities over a career spanning decades.

At the time of Smith's nomination, Plaskett emphasized the significance of President Biden's commitment to appointing leaders who reflect the country's diversity, saying the nomination fulfilled the promise that his administration would "look like America."

As of Monday's announcement, no explanation was offered for Smith's departure. The office's statement was limited to naming Adam F. Sleeper as Acting U.S. Attorney, now responsible for overseeing all federal prosecutions and legal matters in the territory.

It remains unclear whether the Department of Justice intends to nominate a permanent successor or if Sleeper will continue in the acting capacity for an extended period.