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## Bryan Backs U.S. Military Buildup in Caribbean, Citing War on Drugs and Regional Security Gains

While several CARICOM nations condemn Washington's expanded naval operations near Venezuela, Gov. Bryan says the U.S. presence enhances regional stability, curbs narcotics trafficking, and underscores the USVI's growing strategic and economic importance.

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The USS San Antonio (LPD 17), a U.S. Navy amphibious transport dock, arrived at the Ann E. Abramson Marine Facility in Frederiksted, St. Croix, on Wednesday, October 29, 2025. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM.

Governor Albert Bryan Jr. has expressed support for the growing U.S. military presence in the Caribbean, saying the renewed attention from Washington “is not unwelcome” and strengthens

both regional security and the Virgin Islands' strategic importance.

Bryan's comments, made during last Monday's press briefing, come amid rising unease among CARICOM leaders over U.S. naval and air operations near Venezuela, where tensions have heightened following a series of Pentagon-approved strikes on suspected narco-terrorist vessels. While several Caribbean governments have criticized the Trump administration's expanding deployment, Bryan said he declined to join those statements, emphasizing instead the benefits of U.S. engagement.

The governor noted that Trinidad & Tobago, one of the few CARICOM members openly supporting the U.S. buildup, has faced escalating drug-related violence and kidnappings and views the security partnership as necessary. He argued that renewed U.S. focus on the region improves cooperation against trafficking networks that also affect the Virgin Islands.

Bryan highlighted that the increased naval activity — including deployments of thousands of U.S. troops in Puerto Rico and some on St. Croix — underscores the territory's value as a logistical and strategic hub. He said the return of U.S. Navy vessels to local ports not only enhances defense readiness but also provides an economic boost through crew visits and local spending.

"We've asked for years for greater federal attention to what's happening in the Caribbean," Bryan said. "Now that it's here, it heightens the importance of the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico."