

Court Signals Intent to End Medical-Care Provisions in Bell Facility Agreement, Attorney General Says

Attorney General Gordon C. Rhea said Judge Wilma Lewis indicated she will terminate the medical-care sections of the federal Settlement Agreement after finding sustained compliance, with monitors also reporting progress in several additional areas.

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The John A. Bell Correctional Facility on St. Croix. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM.

ST. CROIX — The Bryan administration says a significant step has been reached in the territory's longstanding federal Settlement Agreement governing conditions at the John A. Bell Adult Correctional Facility, following a hearing in which District Judge Wilma Lewis indicated her

intent to terminate all provisions related to medical care. V.I. Attorney General Gordon C. Rhea said the development reflects what the Court characterized as sustained compliance with required medical standards.

According to Rhea, the medical-care provisions have been under federal oversight for more than four decades, during which the Virgin Islands and its Bureau of Corrections have worked to meet the terms of the agreement. Rhea said the judge's indication represents progress in the federal case, which continues to evaluate other conditions at the facility.

"I want to congratulate BOC Director Wynn Timerman and all Bureau of Corrections personnel on achieving this major milestone," Rhea said. He stated that the administration "looks forward to continued progress in reforming operations at the John A. Bell Adult Correctional Facility to satisfy the remaining requirements of the Settlement Agreement."

During the hearing, the District Court also reviewed reports from the panel of court-appointed monitors. According to Rhea, the monitors found improvements in several additional compliance areas beyond medical care.

"We thank Judge Lewis for her thoughtful consideration, her acknowledgment of the hard work and professionalism of BOC's medical staff and management, and her decision to terminate portions of the consent decree based on demonstrable compliance," Rhea said.

The medical-care provisions will formally terminate once the Court issues its order. Other sections of the Settlement Agreement remain active and will continue to undergo federal review as the Bureau of Corrections works toward full compliance.